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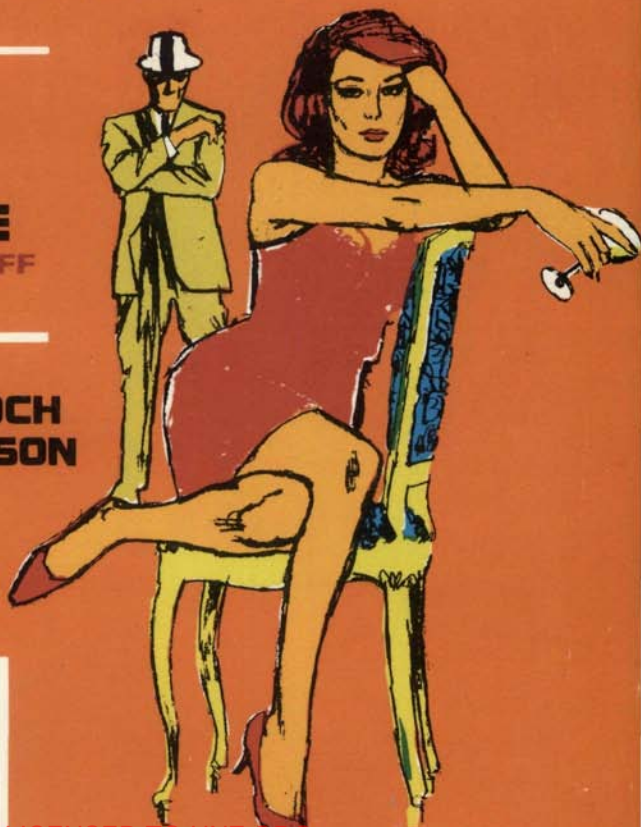
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by **BRETT HALLIDAY**

**THE LAST
DAYS OF
AL CAPONE**
by **DAVID MAZROFF**

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MIKE SHAYNE



MYSTERY MAGAZINE

FEB., 1977
VOL. 40, NO. 2

NEW MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVEL

A CONTOUR FOR KILLING

By BRETT HALLIDAY

According to Phyllis Lamont, the perfect crime is one whose existence is known only to its perpetrator—and Ms Lamont hires Shayne to unravel a skein of deaths on which the finger of suspicion has never rested. But with the redhead on the job, gentle murder erupts into open violence, and in a matter of hours the detective finds himself Number One on the Hit Parade 2 to 48

A NEW TRUE MAFIA FEATURE

THE LAST DAYS OF AL CAPONE

DAVID MAZROFF 56

A NEW SUSPENSE NOVELET

TICKET TO HARPVILLE

JERRY JACOBSON 94

SPECIAL FEATURE

BOOK REVIEW 81

FOUR THRILLING SHORT STORIES

COOL DAVE BURGESS

MAX F. HARRIS 49

A TOUCH OF RED

EDWARD D. HOCH 84

MATINEE

RUTH WISSMANN 114

SOPHIE

WILHELMENA RAISBECK 122

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Complete

THE NEW MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVEL

If Phyllis Lamont had not insisted otherwise, Tony Morell's murder would have gone down as a natural death. Then Lamont hired Mike Shayne, and a well concealed powder train of secret killings detonated in a roar of gunfire and a whole new string of homicides.

by **BRETT HALLIDAY**

AS FIRES GO, that which destroyed Anthony Morell was strictly a one-alarm affair. A bachelor pad damaged far more by the chemical foam used to extinguish it than by the flames. On the nightstand, a bottle of Old Grandad, two-thirds empty, survived. Most of the mattress, on which the large half-charred body of the victim lay, did not.

In his report, the Fire-Lieutenant in charge listed the probable cause of the mini-holocaust as "a cigaret dropped when the smoker fell asleep." The department was summoned by neighbors who reported the blaze at two-thirty a.m.

All in all, it would hardly

have been worthy of a paragraph of newspaper space on an inside page had not Anthony Morell been an employee of the sports department of the Miami *Daily News*.

After reading the brief account published in the early edition, Mike Shayne shook his craggy red head and remarked, "I had a few drinks with the poor devil just last week at The Beef House. Tim brought him along."

"Anyone who smokes in bed is asking for it—especially if he's had something to drink," Lucy Hamilton's tone, usually gentle when addressing her employer, was etched in acid as she regarded the detective, a

A CONTOUR FOR KILLING

touch of flint in her large brown eyes.

"All right, all right," Shayne conceded. "So I smoke in bed once in a while. It helps me relax."

"And you've been known to take a drink before turning in," Lucy continued. Then, softening, "I'm sorry, Michael, but when a thing like this happens, it scares me—for you."

"I know, angel." He rose from his perch on the corner of her desk in the outer room of the small office, looked down at her from his six feet one inch, added, "Morell seemed a hell of a nice guy—tall, easygoing, intelligent. Talk about one-track minds, though. He was sports, sports, sports all the way."

The phone rang and Lucy switched the call through her



monitor board, said, "Yes, he's here, Tim." Shayne took the instrument from her, resumed his seat on the desk corner.

"Hi, Tim," he said. "What's up? I just finished reading about our mutual friend. Too damned bad!"

"A lousy shame!" Tim Rourke agreed. "Mike, Tony Morell is what I'm calling about."

"Something wrong?" the detective asked. He sensed trouble in his long-time reporter friend's tone.

"I don't know." Rourke's voice was doubt-ridden. "Mike, I hate to ask this kind of favor of you, especially when there's no fee in advance, but I wish you'd talk to this girl."

"What girl, Tim?"

"Her name's Lamont—Phyllis Lamont—and she claims to have been with Tony till right before he died."

"So . . . ?"

"Well, dammit, she claims Tony had sworn off cigarets and booze. She thinks he was murdered some way."

"Why drag me into it?" Mike Shayne asked.

"Because Carl Dirkson suggested it. He says, if it turns out Tony died like they said, forget it. But if there was any hanky-panky, he wants it investigated—and he may want you to do the job."

"May?" said the detective

with a sigh. "What about the autopsy report? That should tell the story."

"It's not in yet—traffic jam at the morgue."

"Your boss, Carl Dirkson, wants me to talk to this broad on spec?"

"Do it, Mike—for me," Rourke pleaded.

"Okay." The redhead sighed again. "Where and when?"

"How about I bring her over to your office?"

"Not a chance! If I've got to listen to some cockamamie story for free, I want a drink—and you're buying. How about the Seminole Room?"

It was the *News* reporter's turn to sigh as he uttered a reluctant, "Okay."

Whatever Mike Shayne had anticipated Phyllis Lamont to be, the reality came as a complete surprise. His one-meeting impression of the deceased sportswriter was of a big, rumpled, wet-tweed type who had trouble keeping his shirt-buttons in alignment and his hair out of his eyes.

From the flared cuffs of her beige suede leisure suit slacks to its fall-away neckline, Phyllis Lamont radiated ultra-modern chic. Her golden brown hair was casual but untousled, her eyes were smoky grey, her lips thin, sensual, intelligent. Her voice was well-bred Mary-

land soft, her gaze unflinchingly direct.

"I came to Miami when Tony called and told me he was lonely. He needed—well, somebody to look after him. Until I cleaned his apartment, you wouldn't believe..." She shuddered, added, "And I got him to give up smoking and drinking again."

"Again?" Shayne fingered his Martell on the rocks.

She gestured it away. "Oh, Tony had his weaknesses, Mr. Shayne. But he was a damn good writer. He needed organization, that's all. And I *know* he didn't drink or smoke last night because I was with him in the apartment until after midnight."

"How long after?" the redhead asked.

For a moment, Phyllis looked down. Then, lifting her lovely head, "Until one-fifteen."

"Okay, Miss Lamont. If the fire was reported at two-thirty it must have started after you left. It takes time for a smoldering mattress to ignite. But that still leaves time for Morell to down a couple of slugs, light up and pass out."

"But he was on the wagon!" the young woman protested.

"How about that bottle of bourbon—two-thirds empty?"

"That bottle had been standing on his bedside table for four

days—two-thirds empty," she replied firmly. "Tony kept it there as a sort of character test."

"Miss Lamont," said the detective, "what do you want me to do? If there was foul play, the police are infinitely better equipped to handle it than I am. If there was none, you're wasting your time and mine."

"But it's not the first time," she insisted. "Why do you think I came down here from Sherwood Forest? Tony called me and he was scared—he said someone tried to push him off a yacht when he was covering a regatta last Wednesday. And he couldn't swim."

Shayne and the reporter exchanged glances. Rourke's left eyebrow rose. "Why didn't you mention it earlier?" Rourke asked.

"Because Tony made me promise not to," she replied. "He didn't want anyone else to know he was afraid of water. He was like a little boy about so many things." She paused, took a deep breath, then added, "You may think I'm a damn fool but I'm going to prove Tony didn't die a natural death—and when I do that, I want you to find who killed him. I'm prepared to pay whatever it takes."

A waiter captain approached, carrying a phone, said, "A call

for you, Mr. Rourke. A Mr. Dirkson, sir."

When it was jacked in, the reporter said, "Carl? Rourke here."

His cadaverous face fell into serious mold as he listened to the *News* city editor. After a moment, he said, "That's it?" and hung up. He looked at Phyllis Lamont a long moment, then said, "You may not have to prove a thing, Miss Lamont. City desk just got the M.E.'s report. No alcohol in the stomach, no recent ciraget-fume traces in the bronchial passages."

II

PHYLLIS LAMONT DIDN'T SAY, "I told you so," nor did she swell with triumph. But there was vindication in the smoky grey eyes as she turned them from Rourke to Shayne, reached into a gold-mounted beige leather shoulder bag and drew forth a checkbook...

"Hold it, Miss Lamont," said Rourke. "The *News* is going to launch a full-dress investigation into Tony Morell's death. After all, he was an accredited staff member, even if he was a relatively new one. The paper takes care of its own."

The single syllable the grey-eyed woman uttered was as sharply expressive as it was

unexpected—it rhymed with *wit*. Having thus demolished both the *News* and its prize reporter, she turned her attention back to Shayne and said, "I want to hire you. I know your work by reputation and I'm willing to pay any fee within reason."

"Wait a *minute*!" Rourke reached for her arm. "The *News* may want to hire Shayne. Why waste your money?"

Again her look demolished the reporter. She said, "Because it's my money and I don't believe I'm wasting it." Then, again to the detective, "Mr. Shayne, are you free to work on the murder of Tony Morell exclusively?"

"I am." For an instant, the redhead had an odd sensation of standing in front of a preacher in the process of getting married.

"Mike, for Pete's sake!" cried Rourke. "You know we'll pay you full scale and expenses."

There was, the detective thought, something about this young woman that wiped out everyone else around—especially Tim. He accepted her check, folded it, put it in his pocket.

The lanky journalist pushed back his chair abruptly and rose from the table. "Happy homicide" he muttered angrily and strode from the room.

Mike Shayne and Phyllis Lamont exchanged a speculative look. Then the girl said, "Thanks."

"What made you decide on me?" he asked.

"The moment Mr. Rourke mentioned your name I knew I wanted to hire you to find who killed Tony. You see, I *have* heard of you. And I have an idea we may find ourselves a far cry from the usual criminal-journalistic channels before we unravel it."

"What makes you think that?" Shayne inquired. She allowed him to light her cigaret, exhaled, studied him, narrow-eyed, through pale blue smoke before replying.

"Shayne," she said, "what is your concept of the perfect crime?"

The detective thought it over, said, "Solution of crime, not abstract study, has been my line, Lamont. So, off the top of my head, I'd have to say the perfect crime is one that defies solution. Right?"

She shook her head. "On the contrary, Shayne, the perfect crime is one whose existence is never suspected. And don't tell me you're not aware that such crimes are committed every day of the year—the murder that goes on the record as 'death from natural causes', the embezzlement that is not only un-

reported but whose existence is not even suspected, the accident that is no accident at all."

She paused, then, "A perfect crime is a crime that goes unreported because no one but the criminal is aware that it has ever occurred."

The redhead felt uncomfortable. Subliminally, like all who traffic in crime on either side of the law, he was quite aware that such unrecorded felonies exist—but he found it difficult to acknowledge their existence, suggesting as it did such a vast area of robbery and murder beyond all legal control.

It gave him a sense of helplessness he found utterly alien to his nature.

He said, "Are you suggesting the death of Anthony Morell is such a crime?"

"Not any more," she told him. "Not since the autopsy report. Not since I hired you to work on it."

"I understand."

"Any questions, Shayne?"

"Two."

"Go ahead."

"Okay," he said. "I'd like to know *why* Morell thought someone was trying to kill him and who that someone might be. I met the deceased—with our friend Rourke—only last week. I liked him—a pleasant, intelligent, gifted man, obviously in love with his work.

Why anyone would want to kill him..." He let it hang.

"That," Phyllis Lamont replied, "is two questions in one—but never mind. They both have the same answer. It's money."

"Morell didn't impress me as a man who had money—money worth killing him for," the detective said. "He lived modestly enough. His job, while a good one, hardly paid off in syndicated riches. He drove an old car."

"I know, Shayne. A horrible old heap. But Tony didn't *need* money—he *had* money, an ironclad trust fund income from his grandfather's estate. He wasn't exactly rich on the income, but he was secure. He wouldn't have come into the principal of the estate for fifteen years, but basically he had no financial worries."

"But how would killing him benefit anyone?"

"That," she replied, "is one of the things I'm hiring you to find out, Shayne. Tony and I are both from Baltimore, but what happened to him happened here. I can help you with background material, details of the estate, Tony's friends and enemies—if you like."

"Right now, Lamont," the redhead told her, "I have a feeling I'm going to need all the help I can get if I'm going to

help you—especially with the *News* and almost certainly the police conducting their own investigations."

"You'll handle them." She spoke with quiet confidence.

"I hope you're right," he said. "Now, my second question—who in hell are you, anyway?"

"The late Tony Morell's girl," she replied.

She was, he thought, a very good liar indeed, but not quite good enough.

The interview was at an end. As they rose, the waiter captain presented Shayne with the check. Paying it, he decided Tim Rourke would hear from him about this mild chicanery later.

In the foyer of the restaurant, a thickset man of middle height rose from a chair and said, "Where to, Phyl?"

"Back to the Beach," she said. "I've got to call the home office."

She made no move to introduce him to the detective, merely said over her shoulder, "I'm at the Sands East. Call me as soon as you have something."

She strode out of the restaurant a step ahead of her companion, who turned to take a quick look back before going through the revolving door that led to the street. His eyes were blue in a sun-bronzed face, his

nothing had a business executive look.

He was obviously no mere hired chauffeur.

Shayne glanced at the card his client had given him. It read in graceful script, *Phyllis Lamont*, and, beneath, in smaller letters, *Personal Representative*. There were, in the lower corners, a Baltimore address and phone and cable numbers.

He wondered what in hell Phyllis Lamont personally represented.

III

DRIVING BACK TO the Flagler street office, it occurred to Shayne that, for a self-avowed friend of the deceased, Phyllis Lamont had told him very little. For the time being, since he had given him a two-thousand-dollar retainer (with three more, plus expenses, on its successful conclusion), it was all right with him. From the outset of the meeting, she had impressed the redhead as a young woman who knew exactly what she wanted and how to get it.

Then there was always the possibility that her check might bounce.

It didn't. Shayne had Lucy call a friend at the bank and was informed that the Lamont account, while only a few days



old, had ample funds for the amount.

Thus reassured, the detective went to work.

His first move was to call a private investigator in Baltimore named Mark Hendler for information on both his client and the murdered sportswriter.

When Hendler called back an hour later, it was to report that Phyllis Lamont was a well born and educated young Baltimorean whose family had lost their money while she was in her teens but who had not let that stop her.

"She's quite an operator," the Baltimore detective told him.

"Runs her own business. Does P.R. work for fashionable shops, promotes charity events, keeps in the news. A looker, too. Everybody seems to like her. She's close to some. Very Important People."

Shayne said, "Was she ever tied in with Tony Morell?"

"If she was, nobody noticed. Too damn bad about him, by the way. Hell, they probably knew each other, they both got around. But if they were close, it never made the gossip columns. Lamont didn't have much luck with the broads for a guy in his business."

"His wife took him for a bundle last year when she divorced him. Rumor has it that's why Morell had to get out of Baltimore. He was way behind in his alimony payments."

That was about it.

Hanging up, Mike Shayne wondered if the ex-wife, Marilyn, had had her sportswriter ex-husband wiped out over his failure to pay her alimony. He doubted it.

In the first place, if Morell had been murdered—something yet to be proved—on the surface, it looked to be a subtly plotted and probably expensive slaying. In the second place, the detective failed to see how Marilyn could profit from the crime. A rubout was, he decided, probably the least practi-

cal method for collecting alimony in arrears.

A glance at his watch told Mike Shayne that he was hungry—it was well past two o'clock. "If anyone calls," he told Lucy on his way out of the office, "I'll be at The Beef House."

So far, he decided over a Martell on the rocks, it was a peculiar murder case—if, indeed, it *was* a murder case. A man dies in bed, presumably asphyxiated after falling asleep, drunk, with a lighted cigaret. But the post mortem reveals traces of neither alcohol nor tobacco.

Heart failure? A stroke? Could be—at the moment, neither one could be ruled out.

Yet his client had paid Shayne a two-thousand-dollar retainer on the presumption that it was homicide.

Shayne's food came—a chef's special of deviled roast beef bones with Long Branch potatoes and a liberal side order of string beans, fresh and tender, cooked with sliced mushrooms and almonds. Also a late edition of the *Miami Daily News*.

While he ate, the detective read the late sportswriter's obituary. It had been given front page space and, while there was no byline, the red-head recognized his friend

Rourke's style. Tim had let out all the stops on this one.

"Early today, the *News* and its readers lost a first-class talent, a proven sportswriting talent that only recently joined the ablest staff of specialists in Florida..."

There was more, a lot more, eulogizing the late Anthony Morell and listing his credits and achievements. Morell, it appeared, was not only celebrated for his coverage of Baltimore major league baseball and football teams for the *Sun*, but his articles had appeared regularly in *The Sporting News*, more occasionally in both *Sports Illustrated* and *Esquire*. Two collections of his works had appeared in both hardcover and paperback editions.

Evidently, Shayne decided as he cut succulent meat from a beef rib, Tony Morell had confined his sloppiness to his clothing and his marriage. Certainly there was no indication of sloppiness in Tim's eulogy of his work.

As to suspicion of murder, the obit played it down. The only mention of such a possibility occurred at the end of the story in a muted suggestion that "the cause of death has yet to be officially determined."

Mike Shayne was tempted to call Rourke and ask if there was any reason to doubt the

fact of murder since the M.E.'s report that morning. As if someone had read his mind, pretty, blue-eyed Patti, latest in a long line of attractive young waitresses who seemed ever to be leaving the restaurant to get married, set a telephone on the table and jacked it in.

The redhead nodded his thanks and picked up the handset, said, "Shayne here."

"This is Lamont." His client had the knack of sounding sexy even while being crisp. "I want you to meet me at the airport in"—a pause—"exactly one hour." She named the air-line lounge in which she would be awaiting him by the souvenir shop, then hung up.

Shayne took his time finishing the meal—he had plenty of both. He hoped Lamont would not give him indigestion before he earned his fee. She seemed a bossy bitch...

Later, as he entered the air-line terminal his client had specified, the redhead paused to glance at the schedule of incoming planes. A jet from New York was due in exactly six minutes and was marked *on time*. It was also listed as having made a Baltimore stop en route.

He went on up to the incoming lounge with its bright plasti-color furniture, looked around in case his client was

already there. A cluster of perhaps fourscore persons waiting to greet the new arrivals was already gathered behind the cable that kept them from jamming the plane exit ramp.

Casually, he noted a dark young man who already had the detective's favorite position when meeting an incoming jet. It was at the far end of the roped-off area, giving the man a clear view of offboarding passengers unimpeded by anyone in the waiting group.

In front of him stood an expensive looking golf bag, from whose top a small forest of clubheads protruded, each snugly covered with its own blue felt sock.

The detective moved toward the souvenir shop, reaching it just as his client, stunning in her beige suede leisure suit, stepped from the escalator and came toward him, her grey eyes alert and searching.

"Okay," she said, "Let's get over to the gate. The plane's just in."

He said, "Would I be out of order if I asked who we're here to meet?"

"You'll know in a minute." She brushed him off, her attention on the big jet docked just outside the lounge windows and the ramp moving into place for disembarkment.

They were of all ages, sexes,

shapes and sizes. Some were greeted enthusiastically by parents and children, some more quietly by friends and acquaintances, some by no one at all. There were more than a hundred of them, and it took some time for them to clear. The detective began to wonder if whoever he and Lamont were there to meet had made the flight.

She must have read his expression, for she said, "Don't worry, Shayne, Uncle Phil is always the last one off. He hates being jostled in crowds."

Mike Shayne shrugged inwardly. He glanced to his left, saw that the young man with the golf bag was still there, noted that he, too, was watching the gate with a frown of concentration. Some small sound from Shayne's companion caused him to return his attention to her.

IV

A THICKSET, HITE-HAIRED man, clad in superbly tailored banker's grey, was moving toward them with an assured athletic stride that belied his silver, mod-cut locks. His face lit up when he spied Shayne's client and he lifted a hand in greeting as he strode through the gate.

Before he could take another step, he pitched forward on his

face, the right side of his head suddenly erupting blood. Simultaneously, the muted champagne-cork *pop* of a silenced firearm sounded in Mike Shayne's ears.

With pantherine swiftness, the redhead drew the big .45 from its shoulder holster as he pivoted to the left, covering Phyllis Lamont with his larger body. He saw the dark young man sliding what looked like a wooden club back into the golf bag. Even as Shayne drew a quick bead on the hit-man, a panicky woman screamed and fell over the crowd-restraining cable, pinwheeling directly across his line of fire.

By the time she was out of the way, the dark young man had moved swiftly behind a group of stunned greeters and arrivals. The detective caught just a glimpse of the killer as he shouldered his big bag and strolled nonchalantly toward the staircase that ran parallel to the escalator.

Shayne took off after him. As he did so, he heard his client exclaim behind him, "My God—they shot Uncle Phil!"

The redhead's knowledge of the labyrinthine Miami International Airport was almost encyclopedic, thanks to the score-plus occasions on which he had had either to trail a suspect there or avoid himself

being trailed. Hence, when he caught a glimpse of the hit-man's golf bag as its owner vanished through a modest doorway on the right of the stair landing alongside and halfway down the escalator, Shayne was able to gamble on cutting off his quarry with small chance of losing him.

On the far side of the door through which the dark-haired killer had vanished was a sloping corridor that ultimately emerged in the airline's incoming luggage pickup room—beyond which lay a parking area.

Although the corridor was used chiefly by airline employees, it was unlikely the man with the golf bag would run—for to be thus spotted by an employee was tantamount to rousing a hue and cry.

On the other hand, with his .45 safely out of sight in its shoulder holster, the redhead could move as fast as he wished. Scorning the slow-moving crowded escalator, he raced down the adjoining stairs like a broken field runner, dodging children and handbags and men and women as if they were would-be tacklers.

Shayne raced past the corridor door his target had taken, knowing the man had too big a lead. At the foot of the staircase he swung right, almost upset-

ting a fat elderly gentleman in a jumpsuit that bulged all over, managed to skid into the incoming luggage room with its slow-moving turntable just in time to see the golf bag approach an electric-eye door at the opposite end of the room.

Shayne had to circle the turntable and the scores of people awaiting their bags. He made the electronic door a full six seconds after the hit-man, did not draw his automatic again until he was actually moving through the silent portal.

When he reached to the parking area sidewalk, his man was standing less than fifty feet ahead of him and to his right, lighting a cigaret as if he had all the time in the world. The big golf bag stood upright at his left side.

As the detective moved toward the murderer, he concentrated on his hands, to make sure the casual gesture of cigaret-lighting was no camouflage for a sudden move toward his pursuer. But the dark-haired hit-man lifted his head to exhale plumes of faint smoke into the air, as nonchalantly as if he were really playing golf on some friendly course.

Shayne noted that he had an aquiline profile. He took a silent step toward the murderer, the .45 steady in his right fist.

So wholly was he concentrating on capturing this man that he only half-heard the soft whisper of tires on the parking area hardtop to his left and behind him.

But it was enough . . .

Cursing his idiocy at letting determination to nail the killer outweigh all other considerations, Mike Shayne dropped flat on the sidewalk as a handgun barked twice from the front seat of a large blue sedan moving slowly toward the murderer.

Simultaneously, the angry hornet buzz of the bullets sounded over his head, followed by the near-instant *ping* of their striking the concrete wall behind him and the whine of their ricochet.

Shayne snapped a shot at the sedan, which speeded up just as he squeezed trigger. He heard the bullet hit home in the side of the car, which spurted past him before he could fire again, braked to a screeching halt in front of the golf-bag toting killer.

The redhead rolled to his left, seeking the shelter of a parked pickup truck, just as the dark-haired hit-man drew his long-barreled silenced automatic and fired a four-shot burst at the detective. Again, the bullets came close.

It took Shayne two precious

seconds to realign his gunsights around the right rear tire of the pickup truck—and then his firing was hurried. Small wonder that neither of the bullets he was able to send winging after the sedan struck its intended mark—the right rear tire of the rapidly receding vehicle.

Angry, frustrated, far from proud of his performance, Mike Shayne found himself flanked by a pair of airport policemen as he scrambled to his feet and was forced, meekly, to surrender his weapon during the maddening four-minute wait it took them to confirm his identification.

V

EVENING WAS SETTING IN by the time Mike Shayne and his client walked out of Miami Police Headquarters. After giving one of Detective Captain Len Sturgis' finest a statement of his activities at the airport, the redhead had spent more than ninety minutes studying the photographs of known hit-men and had drawn a complete blank. Phyllis Lamont had been questioned about her personal and professional relationships with the late Philip Dexter Morgan, the Baltimore investment tycoon who had been so brutally murdered as he stepped from the incoming ramp.



Shayne drove her back to the Sands East in silence—a silence so glum that he was surprised when, as he braked the Buick at the hotel entrance, she said, "Come on in, Shayne. We've got to talk."

She was, he thought, bearing up very well—a fact that did not surprise him. Phyllis Lamont had hardly impressed him as a shrinking violet type. Through the open door of the bedroom of her twelfth-floor suite, he saw no feminine clutter of garments and lotion bottles. The only visible bottles rested on a portable bar in the living room. Without comment, she poured the drinks as efficiently as she seemed to do everything else.

When they were settled on opposite ends of the large com-

fortable sofa, she said, "Did you mention any connection between Uncle Phil's murder and Tony Morell's death?"

He shook his head. She said, "Good. I had to, of course. But I didn't bring you into Tony's murder. Now, suppose you tell me what happened to you at the airport."

Mike Shayne did so. When he finished, she said, "Did you identify the man?"

He shook his head, added, "And I never got a look at the man driving the getaway car. May I ask a question?"

"Go ahead."

"What was your connection with 'Uncle' Phil Morgan?"

"I've known him all my life. He and my father went to Hopkins together."

"Was he your real uncle?"

She shook her golden brown head. "No, a pseudo—but we were close, more like father and daughter. He confided in me—either because he relied on my judgment or because talking to me enabled him to clarify his own judgment."

"I take it he sent you down here, Lamont?"

She nodded. He put me on his private payroll to come down here and look into the Tony Morell problem. I did know Tony, even if we weren't exactly close. And Tony was frightened after the regatta at-

tempt. And there *was* reason to suspect someone might be after him."

"Did you tell the police that?"

"Not yet," she replied. "The whole business sounds—well, it sounds close to fantasy. But it isn't."

"So I gather." Shayne spoke drily. "But if somebody *has* been getting away with murder unsuspected, why in hell such a public killing?"

"Because," said Lamont, "whoever rigged it must have realized for the first time he was under suspicion."

"Why did Morgan fly down here?" the redhead asked.

"When I called him about Tony's murder, he decided to come. He seemed to think we could nail his murderer down here."

"Did he tell you why?"

Again she shook her head. "All he said was, 'Meet me at the airport.' When I asked if he wanted you there, he said, 'By all means.'"

"I'm still in the dark over the background, Lamont." The redhead finished his glass and she refilled it—and her own.

Reseated, she said, "Uncle Phil is—was—President and Board Chairman of Eastern Shore Investment and Loans—ESIL for short. It's a big company, based in Baltimore. About a year ago, he told me he

was worried about the deaths of some of his larger account beneficiaries."

She frowned, sipped, said, "There were three deaths he had pinpointed as suspicious. He had no hard evidence. But he felt a shadowy pattern that connected them. And three..." She let it hang.

"What sort of pattern?" the detective asked.

She took a deep breath. "Uncle Phil believed in his intuitions. He was damn near psychic sometimes. What really got him started was the death last fall of a young millionaire named Bill Masters. His Rolls went over a cliff at night. It had come out of the garage only the day before after a complete checkup. But the steering mechanism failed."

"Why?"

Lamont shrugged, said, "No way. It was burned to molten metal. Since Bill was an amateur racetrack competitor, the police investigation was a technicality. But Uncle Phil and I both knew that, except in a race, Bill never took a chance behind the wheel. He was a careful driver."

"Your mystery killer seems to favor fire," said Shayne.

"Not necessarily. There was another client named Lora Wingate—drowned while swimming alone off her estate

near Trappe. She was an excellent swimmer and never went in the water less than two hours after eating."

"Make it fire and water," the redhead suggested.

Again a shake of the head. "There was Mike Logan, heir to a distilling fortune. He died of a cerebral hemorrhage—less than ten days after a complete health checkup for his insurance company. That should give you some idea."

"People *do* die—often without apparent cause."

"Three of them—all account holders in a single investment and loan company? Three people—each of apparent accident or from natural causes? Three people—each with a principal heir or heiress in deep financial difficulty? In Uncle Phil's words, 'That's too damn many miracles.'"

Shayne said, "The principal beneficiaries were questioned?"

"He talked to them himself."

"Nothing?"

"Nothing," she replied, "except for an aura of tension surrounding each of them. Nothing to go to court on, but it was enough for Uncle Phil. So he could only wait."

"I take it," said the redhead, "that it was the attempt to push Tony Morell overboard at the regatta that brought you down here."

"It was the first time we knew of an attempt that failed," Lamont told him. "So he sent me down here to sit on Tony and—well, I failed. It had been Uncle Phil's idea to hire you, Shayne."

"He didn't send you here alone," Shayne told her.

"What do you mean? Of course, he did."

"How about the suntanned man at the restaurant this morning?" the detective asked.

Phyllis Lamont looked surprised. "Oh," she said. "Leon didn't come down with me. He showed up only yesterday."

"Who is Leon?"

"Leon Davies? He's—he was—one of Uncle Phil's right hand men. Where Uncle Phil went, Leon went."

"Sort of a trouble shooter?"

"No—Uncle Phil was his own trouble shooter." The grey eyes softened in reminiscence. "He used to say he needed Leon to clean up after him when he got through shooting trouble full of holes."

"I'd like to talk to him," the redhead told her.

She frowned slightly. Shayne thought she was going to ask him, "What about?" but she didn't. Instead, she said, "He's staying here at the hotel." She reached for the phone on the table. Leon Davies was not in.

He finished his drink, got up.

"What are you going to do now?" she asked.

"Check out on a couple of things. Eat dinner." He paused, added, "Who was Tony Morell's chief beneficiary?"

"His ex-wife, Marilyn. But..." She let it hang. Then, "What about the man who killed Uncle Phil? You saw him."

"I'd like to find him—if he's still in town, which I doubt."

She nodded, rose, looked at him with entreaty in her eyes. "Remember, this is the first time they've been forced into the open, Shayne."

He said, "I'd like to know how they found out you and Philip Morgan were suspicious of Morell's death. Somebody must have sprung a leak."

"There's big money involved," Lamont told him. "Very big money. With that kind of loot..." Again she let it hang.

VI

BEFORE HE DROVE OUT of the hotel parking garage, Mike Shayne phoned Lucy Hamilton at home on the Buick's radio telephone. It was much too late to reach her at the office.

She said, "Thank heaven, you called, Michael! Are you all right?"

"I'm okay," he told her. "Sorry I couldn't get to you

earlier, angel, but I've been tied up since that airport mess. Thanks for sticking by. Any calls?"

"Nothing except a call from a Marilyn Morell—she says she's the ex-wife of that poor sportswriter who burned to death."

"Did she leave a number?"

Lucy gave it to him and asked him to take care of himself. After she hung up, the detective sat for a long moment, frowning at the Buick dashboard. How, he wondered, had the dead writer's widow, or ex-widow or whatever learned so quickly of his involvement in the murder investigation of her ex-husband?

There was, he decided, only one way to find out. He picked up the car-phone again and dialed the number Lucy had given him.

To the female voice that answered, Shayne said, "Marilyn Morell?"

"Just a moment," was the reply. "Who is this?"

Shayne told her and held on. Moments later, a low-pitched soft voice said, "Mr. Shayne, thank you for calling. I've been waiting."

"You want to see me?" he asked her.

"Very much. I'd like to talk to you about poor Tony's—death. I'm sure it wasn't

... well, what people seem to be saying it was."

"I'd be glad to talk to you," he told her. "Where and when? Have you been in town long?"

"Only since this afternoon. I'm with a friend at—" She gave him an address in the northwest part of the city, and the redhead said he'd get there as fast as he could.

She was alone when he arrived, a tall, rather buxom, thirty-ish woman, handsome rather than pretty, with brown eyes and short-cut reddish-brown hair. She wore black, but so flamboyant was her figure that it made a travesty of mourning. The detective sensed an undercurrent of tension beneath her smile which reminded him of what Phyllis Lamont had told him earlier of Philip Morgan's reaction to the aura of the beneficiaries he had interviewed.

She talked rapidly in her low, slightly husky voice—of her late husband, of their courtship, of their marriage and divorce. "I didn't want to take so much alimony—after all, I have no child-support problem—but my lawyers made me do it."

Much of her conversation was self justification—yet the redhead derived an impression that she was merely talking rather than saying anything. To the few questions he put,

her answers were not answers at all.

For example, when he inquired if she had any idea who might have murdered her ex-husband, her reply was, "But who would ever want to kill Tony? He was such a great big lovable Teddy bear of a man ..." And so on.

The first time he made a move to leave, she actually clung to his jacket lapels and fastened him to the carpet with a torrent of further inconsequentialities. Not until the second time, a few minutes later, did she let him go—and then it was as if her stall had collapsed like a pricked balloon.

A bloody waste of time! he thought as he strode to the car parked in the driveway outside.

He was bone hungry, bone tired, also mystified. If Marilyn Morell had had nothing to tell him, why in hell had she insisted he come see her so quickly? That, he decided, was the only mystery involved in his visit.

Shayne began to think of a two-inch top-sirloin steak, charcoal black on the outside, blood-rare within, adrip in a blend of sweet butter and its own juices, flanked by a steaming baked potato and mounds of mushrooms and French fried onions, with thick green stalks of asparagus afloat in more

sweet butter on one side, a split and grilled tomato gratinéed on the other.

He was halfway back to town when he heard the police siren behind him. As it grew louder, he obediently slowed and pulled to a stop on the right hand side of the street to let the patrol car pass.

Instead, it pulled to a halt behind him, its red top blinker flashing, its siren subsiding in a low growl. The officer who approached him had his right hand on the handle of the Magnum Police Special protruding from his belt holster. Shayne lifted both hands shoulder high and let the officer open the car door with his left hand.

As Shayne emerged into the headlight glare of the patrol car, the officer called to his partner behind the wheel of the police vehicle, "Hey, it's Mike Shayne, for Pete's sake! Sorry, Mr. Shayne, but we were ordered to pick up a car with your plates."

"That dumb dispatcher!" The other patrolman got out and joined them.

"What was the charge?" the detective asked.

"Something about a body in the trunk," said the first officer.

"May we have the keys?" said the second. "Just a formality."

As he handed them over,

Mike Shayne felt a sickening premonition that was quickly fulfilled when the hinged lid of the trunk compartment was lifted. Nor did he need the glow of the police flashlight to recognize the body that had been stuffed inside during his visit with the supposed Marilyn Morell.

It was the body of the dark-haired hit-man. Somebody had put a hole in the center of his forehead with a high-caliber bullet.

Three murders had brought Phyllis Lamont to Miami. Now there were six!

VII

HULKING CAPTAIN LEN STURGIS, Chief of Detectives of the Miami Police Force, looked across his desk at Mike Shayne and said, "I'll accept the fact you didn't kill that character. I'll accept the fact you didn't stuff his body in the trunk of your car. You're not *that* stupid, Mike. So how do you read it?"

The redhead shook his head. "The only thing I can think of, Len, is that somebody wants me out of action and decided to set me up. Also, it offered a neat way of getting rid of an unwanted stiff."

"What about the woman, the alleged Morell widow?"

"Damned if I know. She could have been an imposter. If she

isn't, she's in a lot of trouble. Have you caught up with her yet?"

Sturgis shook his immense greying head, said, "The real owners of that house you went to are vacationing in Biloxi. We got them on the phone. They claim to know nothing about letting anyone use their home. You say there were two broads?"

"I only saw one. But there were two voices on the phone."

"We'll keep looking." The detective captain's tone was not encouraging. He scowled at his blotter, lifted his eyes, added, "Wonder why in hell they wanted you out of action."

"So do I," the redhead replied. "Maybe, if you let me out of here, I can find out."

"Okay—get lost. But I wish to hell someone would tell me what in hell is going on. Incidentally, if it does you any good, your friend Morell died of asphyxiation."

"Murder?"

"Probably. The M.E. is still playing it cute. But, Mike, don't expect any medals for delivering us the body of Philip Morgan's murderer."

"I won't," Shayne assured him as he got to his feet.

The hour was close to one a.m.—too late to start any more action that night. Shayne was still hungry and, since The Beef

House kitchen was closed, he drove to an all-night steak house, where he settled for an inch-thick broiled rib of beef equipped with standard hashed brown potatoes, indifferent mixed vegetables and a brace of yesterday's French rolls. The "butter" was oleo.

Far from The Beef House standards, but it would hold body and soul together until the next day. He went home, called his client, learned she was not in her hotel, poured himself a tall glass of cognac and water, drank it and went to bed.

Still uptight, he reached for the pack of cigarets on his night table, then stayed his hand, halted by Lucy's remarks after learning of Tony Morell's death. Then, with a defiant growl, he pulled one out and lit it. But it tasted sharp and acrid and he was forced to put it out after a couple of puffs.

Within a few minutes, he was fast asleep . . .

When he hit the office the next morning, a sun-bronzed, impeccably dressed Leon Davies was there ahead of him. His aura was aggressive, but his words were polite and soft-spoken. "Mr. Shayne? I hope you can spare me a few minutes."

In the inner office, he added, "As a long-time colleague of

Phil Morgan, I feel I'm entitled to some information on the progress of your investigation into his death."

"Perhaps you are," the redhead replied. "But until my client agrees to let me release the information, I'm not at liberty to give it."

Light blue eyes bored into Shayne's, revealing that their owner was not a man who took frustration lightly. Then he relaxed and said, "Of course—I should have known. Perhaps, if the three of us were to have a meeting—say, at lunch—we could exchange information to everyone's benefit."

"Perhaps," the detective replied, "if Lamont agrees."

"You'll be in touch with her?" And, at Shayne's nod, "I'm at the Sands East, too."

The detective nodded again. After a few moments of increasingly heavy silence, Davies took his departure. When Shayne heard the door of the outer office close behind him, he picked up the phone and asked Lucy to call his client. Then he sat back and scowled at the instrument, a hitherto latent unease rising to front and center.

"She hasn't been in since yesterday evening," Lucy stood in the doorway. Then with a toss of her pretty head indicating the man who had just left,

"What was that all about just now, Michael?"

"You overheard?"

"You left the door open."

"Angel"—Shayne squinted at her—"I got a distinct impression that Davies was fishing for information as to the whereabouts of Phyllis Lamont."

"Do you know where she is, Michael?"

"No, dammit!" The redhead shook his head. "But I'm going to do my damndest to find out."

Apart from Lamont's apparent disappearance, there were a discouraging number of dead ends and loose ends thus far in the case. Among the former were the identity of Tony Morell's murderer, the identity of the man who had driven Philip Morgan's killer from the airport, that of whoever had put the hit-man's corpse in the rear of the redhead's car. Loose ends included the whereabouts of this still-faceless individual, and that of both Phyllis Lamont and the alleged widow of the dead sportswriter.

Mike Shayne decided to look into his client's movements first. He drove across the Bay to the Sands East and discussed it with Art Capron, the hotel security chief, an ex-cop the redhead had known for years. Apart from the fact that Lamont had been seen crossing the



lobby toward the main entrance shortly after ten p.m. the previous evening, there was nothing to go on. Her luggage was still in her suite, according to the maid.

That was the package. No one had paid attention to what she was wearing at the time of her departure. Shayne thanked Capron and drove back to Miami, a furrow of worry dividing his craggy eyebrows. He

called Lucy on the car phone while stalled by a red light, told her to notify him the instant Lamont called, added that he would be at The Beef House for a session with Tim Rourke.

VIII

HE FOUND THE REPORTER seated morosely in the usual rear booth they often shared, staring gloomily into the dregs of a rye and water highball.

Without looking up, Rourke said, "By rights, I shouldn't be speaking to you."

"Then don't," the detective replied.

He was hungry and thirsty and ordered a double Martell on the rocks and, for a change from his usual beef diet, a brace of mutton chops with cottage fries and watercress. Not until he had taken a healthy belt of the brandy did Shayne again look at his companion, who was now regarding him with the melancholy expression of a bird dog just robbed of a crested grouse.

"What's bugging you, Tim?" the redhead asked.

"You know what's bugging me," Rourke replied. "I never realized how mercenary you were until yesterday morning. You know I wanted the paper to hire you, so—"

"Bolts!" said Mike Shayne.

"You told me the paper *might* want to hire me. Lamont offered me a retainer on the spot—a damn sight bigger than your skinflint publisher would pay me, and a damn sight quicker to boot."

"Mercenary—*Hessian!*" said the reporter.

"Besides, Lamont's prettier than you *and* Carl Dirkson rolled into one big ball of succulent, palpitating flesh," the redhead told him.

"You always were a pushover for a pretty face."

"Look who's talking!" the detective hooted. "Oh, drink up, Tim. What have you and your people found out?"

"Damn little," Rourke replied, signaling the waitress for a refill. "You've been getting all the action. By the way, who stuffed that hit-man in your car trunk?"

"I'd give a lot to know."

"Any idea who the hit-man was?" Rourke asked.

The detective shook his head, said, "Leave it to the police—but I'll lay odds he came from the Philadelphia-Baltimore-Washington area. The whole damn case stems from there."

Then, "Thanks, Peggy"—this to the waitress who brought him his food. He waded into the succulent mutton with relish, only looked up minutes later to ask, "Did you look into that al-

leged murder attempt on the regatta yacht last week?"

Rourke moaned. "Jesus, Mike, I was on it all yesterday afternoon. It's a bitch. The Press boat was packed with politicos and freeloaders, two thirds of them half smashed. It's a miracle they *all* didn't fall in the drink."

"Didn't you find anyone who was even near Morell?"

"If we did, they either didn't notice the fact or don't want to admit it," the reporter replied. A pause, then, "Oh, Al Loman was there and claims he saw somebody talking to Tony near the rail. But what the hell—you know Al."

"Yeah, I know Al."

Al Loman was one of those anomolous what-is-its that seem to turn up in every American city. A hanger-on, an odd-job man, a political errand boy, a would-be insider who never makes it.

"Is that all Al told you?" the redhead asked.

"Just about. He saw Tony talking by the rail to a man with a straw colored mustache. Said he was about Tony's height." A pause, then, "But why would Tony be talking to a man who was going to push him overboard—or try to, anyway?"

"Maybe it wasn't the guy," mused Shayne, "or maybe no-

body pushed him. Was Morell smashed?"

"He filed a story, but that doesn't mean he was sober," said Rourke. "He could down his share and still come in with a usable yarn. Four of us worked the yacht angle yesterday—not one of us came up with a real lead."

While Tim talked, Shayne considered the Al Loman angle. If it proved true, there could be at least three reasons for Tony talking to the yellow mustache. One, because he knew him. Two, if he didn't, why would he suspect him of plans to push him overboard? Three, Tony might not have been talking to yellow mustache at all—yellow mustache might have been talking to him.

"Where can I reach Al Loman?" Shayne inquired.

"God knows." Rourke shrugged. "He usually hangs out at the Five Aces after ten p.m." Then, "You're not going to see him?"

"Tim," said the detective, "right now, I'm grasping at straws—even straw-colored mustaches."

Outside, the detective decided to pay a daylight visit to the house where he had been decoyed the night before. He had not traveled fifteen blocks before he realized that he had picked up a tail.

Shayne thought what the hell. Here he was, at least momentarily, at a complete dead end. With the dark-haired hit-man out of the running, he had no lead to follow. Al Loman, a frail reed at best, would not be available until evening. The whereabouts of Marilyn Morell, real or false, was a mystery. He did not even know where his client was.

Yet someone considered him case-knowledgeable enough to put a tail on him. It was a laugh, albeit a wholly sardonic one.

Mike Shayne put his pursuer to the test. Using traffic patterns as an excuse, he speeded up for short stretches, slowed for others, changed lanes and even made an unnecessary detour. His tail kept his distance, a hundred yards and usually three cars behind.

When the redhead reached the house in northwest Miami where the widow Morell had greeted and detained him, his pursuer had discreetly withdrawn from the chase. Shayne halted outside the brief driveway, noting the police sedan pulled in front of the small garage doorway. A patrolman was seated on the front porch steps.

Mike Shayne identified himself and the officer rose to stretch his legs, said, "I'm stuck

here till the owners get back from Biloxi. They're driving."

"Hope you've got relief," the redhead told him. "It could take them a couple of days. Find anything odd?"

The officer opened his hands, said, "Frankly, Mr. Shayne, it's been dull as hell—but that goes with the job. Oh, there's one thing..."

He crossed the brief lawn diagonally to a thicket of subtropical thorns that bordered three sides of the somewhat shaggy yard, pointed to a reddish-brown tangle caught on a spiny branch.

"Thought it was a bird's nest," the officer said. "When I looked closer, I saw it was some kind of wig."

Narrow-eyed, Mike Shayne studied it. Then, turning to the man on guard, "Mind if I take a look on the other side of that hedge?"

"I don't care what you do, Mr. Shayne—as long as you leave the hairpiece there. Headquarters is coming out for it."

The detective walked around the end of the driveway and peered beyond the hedge—to discover the adjoining property empty save for a small shed set well back. A rut road led to it, overgrown with grass. Twenty feet or so back from the paved surface outside, the redhead saw unmistakable tire traces in

the greenery underfoot. It looked evident to him that a car had been driven in there recently and been turned around.

Shayne tugged at his left earlobe with thumb and forefinger. If he was still vague as to motivation, he at least understood the mechanics of his setup of the night before. Someone had driven the hit-man's body to this near-empty lot—and probably brought the two women with him—had waited until the redhead arrived, then stuffed the body in his luggage trunk.

Shayne could not be sure whether the party had consisted of one man and the two women or of two of each sex. Aided by the female who had answered the phone, the male could have moved the body while the supposed Marilyn Morell held him in the house. He had no idea if the true Marilyn Morell had red-brown hair—but he intended to find out.

He decided to get out of there before the P.D. experts arrived, walked out to the car, wishing he could find out the why of it—namely, why it was essential to the murderer, or murderers, to have one Mike Shayne out of the way for a few hours just then.

He said goodbye to the officer

on guard and drove away. The tail was no longer behind him...

IX

THERE WAS NOTHING for Mike Shayne to do but return to the office. Phyllis Lamont had still not called. Neither had anyone else pertinent to the case. The redhead asked Lucy to put in another call to Mark Hendler, the Baltimore private eye.

"Mark," he said when his colleague came on, "I need a make on Marilyn Morell."

"The ex-widow?"

"Right. I want a description—color of eyes, color of hair, the works. Also her whereabouts if possible. Can do?"

"Can try, Shayne. I'll get back to you."

"Also on Leon Davies. He was one of Philip Morgan's men."

"I can give you Davies," Hendler replied. "Quite a wheel in these parts. A tough, smart smoothie. Trouble shooter for Eastern Shore. He's used us more than once. Is he in Miami?"

"He's here. Thanks."

That was it. At least, Shayne thought, Davies was what he was supposed to be. He sat at his desk, doodling, wishing the phone would ring with information that would swing him into

action once more. When it did ring, it was Mark Hendler.

"Okay," Hendler said. "Here's the make on Marilyn Morell. Five-six, solidly built—maybe one-forty—brown eyes, red-brown hair, age thirty-one."

"Whereabouts?" the detective asked.

"According to the woman who shares her apartment, she took off for Miami yesterday, right after she was notified of her ex-husband's death."

"How was she notified, Mark?"

Again according to the apartment-mate, it had come over the phone, long distance from Miami.

"How'd she take it?"

"Apparently, she was all shook up. She kept saying, 'I never meant for them to kill them.' Then she made a plane reservation, packed and took off. She was due in at your end at nine-thirty p.m. Does that help?"

"Did she make any calls before she left?"

"A couple—but the apartment-mate doesn't know who she called. That's it, Shayne."

"Okay, thanks a bundle."

Mike Shayne hung up and frowned at the blotter on his desk. He called in Lucy and asked her, "What time did Marilyn Morell call here yesterday?"

"Just before I closed up—around six-fifteen. I can check my record."

"No need, angel. Thanks."

As he suspected, the call had been a setup. It began to look very much as if its purpose, apart from unloading the hit-man's corpse in his car, had been to keep him out of the way during the time of the real Marilyn Morell's arrival in Miami and for some while afterward.

But why? He had not known the woman was flying down. But someone had—the two phone calls before Marilyn left her apartment must have revealed her intention to somebody. He could not help wondering if his client had not received one of the calls—and, if she had, why she had failed to reveal the fact to him.

More and more, it was becoming imperative that he get in touch with Lamont. Where in hell was she?

The redhead decided to get on the trail of the bogus Marilyn Morell—so he routed Evelyn Maddox out of bed by phone. Evelyn was, at the moment, one of the Miami's two leading call-girl madams. Since her job kept her busy till dawn, Evelyn did not usually rise until the cocktail hour.

She received the detective in the living room of her little

jewelbox of a villa in one of the city's costliest residential areas. Even without makeup, she was a beautiful woman, her pearl white skin aglow with health. If her eyes were a trifle puffy, they were clear of whites and her beryl-green pupils regarded the detective alertly.

"... apart from that, all I can tell you is that this one's hair was not reddish-brown." Shayne concluded his description of the woman who had decoyed him, reached for the cognac on the rocks Maddox had poured him.

"A lot of broads fit that description." His hostess put down her exquisite Sevres coffee cup with beautifully manicured fingers. Her green eyes narrowed in thought and she rearranged the costly Mandarin coat that encased her still well-conditioned body."

"I know." Shayne agreed, added, "There's just a possibility she might be in trouble."

"What kind of trouble?"

"Not the police," he assured her. "It's a fair bet she's keeping out of sight, though."

"How long?"

"Since yesterday anyway—yesterday evening."

"Honestly, Shayne!" She let him light her cigarillo. "To listen to you, one would think you never heard of twenty-four hour dates. A broad just over thirty,



five-five or six, weight one-four-o." She sighed, rolled her eyes, declaimed, "I can but try!" and reached for the pushbutton phone on the glass-topped coffee table.

Twenty minutes later, she put the instrument back in its cradle, pushed a stray lock of ash-blond hair in place and said, "That adds up to four broads out of sight who roughly answer your description." A pause, then, "What makes you think this one is in the business?"

"I'm not sure," the detective replied. "It just seems logical. This has to be a broad who will do anything for a buck—holed up, probably with a hit-man and another broad, probably in on his murder. Almost certainly the other broad helped dispose

of the body. The only likely candidates are either hopped-up kids who don't give a damn or whores. And this was no hopped-up kid."

"I'll keep asking," Evelyn Maddox promised. "How about another belt?"

"Why not—unless you've got a better offer?"

"I have." Her exquisite lips curled in a smile. "But not for you, Mike Shayne. I'd be wasting my breath."

This time, she joined him, pouring two fingers of Martell into her cup, making it a café royale. They were half-finished when the telephone chimed. Evelyn Maddox picked it up, listened, said, "Thanks, Coralie—but what a lousy thing!"

She hung up, said, "That was Coralie Brown, one of my competitors. She said my call worried her and she checked out her girls. Ruby Daniels, one of the four girls missing I told you about—well, when she didn't answer her phone, Coralie got the apartment-house manager to take a look. He found her lying on the floor of her place with a bullet hole in her forehead."

"Kee-rist!" the detective exclaimed. "I'd better call Len Sturgis."

As a result, Shayne had to return to Headquarters to iden-

tify the corpse as that of the woman who had decoyed him while the hit-man's body was stuffed in his car trunk the night before.

"We finally got a make on him," the Captain of Detectives told Shayne. "His name was Arkins—George Arkins—with a string of a.k.a.'s half a yard long. No convictions on hits, but he's been pulled in on suspicion enough times for an easy I.D. A free lance, worked out of D.C."

Shayne nodded. It was middle evening by the time he got through with the police, so Shayne decided he might as well brave the food at the Five Aces while he waited for Al Loman. It proved an unwise decision—the soup was watery, the steak tough and flavorless, the potatoes undercooked, the other vegetables tasteless.

X

BY THE TIME LOMAN came in, the detective was in a mood that matched the grumbling of his stomach. Even with high-heeled shoes, the little hanger-on was short. His features were ferret-sharp, his electric-blue suit too sharply cut, his fedora too stiff and worn at too acute an angle over his right eye.

He entered the nondescript restaurant-saloon as if he

owned the joint, barely acknowledging the greetings he received en route to a favored position at the far end of the bar, where a telephone sat in wait for him. He gestured to the bartender, who apparently needed no further direction as he set to mixing a drink in a small shaker.

Loman surveyed the joint while awaiting its serving, narrow-eyed, impassive, self-important. He needed, Shayne thought, only a half-dollar to toss for a passible imitation of George Raft of the old-time gangster movies.

Until, that is, his gaze reached the spot where the detective was seated. Then Loman's ferret face froze. His eyes dilated and his arrogant expression became one of pure terror. For a moment, Shayne expected him to emit an animal yelp.

The detective beckoned him, then gestured toward the glass on the booth table in front of him. Loman shook his head, his little dark eyes darting wildly around. The bartender put his drink in front of him, but the dapper little man either did not see it or chose to ignore it.

Mike Shayne beckoned again.

This time, Loman hesitated, then slid from his barstool to the linoleum-covered floor. He grinned shakily at the redhead,

a grimace that resembled a strychnine smile, took two steps toward Shayne's booth.

Suddenly, without warning, he spun and bolted toward a door at the rear of the bar, leading toward the back area of the restaurant-saloon, slammed it shut quickly behind him. Shayne, already in pursuit, heard the bolt turn as he raced toward it.

He had no idea why the little man had panicked at sight of him, but he intended to find out.

Pausing only to lift his right foot in a savage kick that shattered the lock, Mike Shayne went right on through, only half-hearing the shouts of alarm from the bar. He bounced off a stack of whiskey cases, ricocheted against another stack, then straightened out in time to burst through the back door of the joint before his quarry could close it.

The redhead sent the rear door into reverse so rapidly that it knocked Loman to a sprawling sitz on the uneven tar surface of the delivery area. The little man tried to scramble to his feet, but the detective by then had a firm grip on the collar of his tightly buttoned jacket, lifting him so that his legs scissored in futility against the air.

Pulling him backward against

his right side, Mike Shayne said, "What in hell is this all about?"

"Don't, Shayne—don't talk to me. Let me go."

"Not until you answer a couple of questions," the redhead told Loman, shaking him like a mastiff worrying a bone.

"Please, Shayne. Let me go. I don't know anything." Loman sounded pitiful. His teeth began to chatter.

"If you don't, then what are you afraid of?" the detective asked.

"Y-y-you, Shayne," the little man stammered.

"Why? I'm not going to hurt you, Al."

"Th-that's what *you* think. They'll put a contract out on me if I talk to y-you."

"Who's putting a contract out?" Shayne snapped.

"How sh-should I know?" Loman countered. "I g-got the word, that's all."

Mike Shayne shook him again, said, "What about the man you saw talking to Morell at the regatta—the man with the light mustache?"

"I don't know who he was. I never saw him before." Loman seemed to have recovered his nerve or become resigned to his fate. "Just let me go."

"More, Al. You know more than that."

"But I *don't*! He was about Morell's size—big—and he had

a blond mustache. That's all, Mike, honest. I wish to hell I'd never laid eyes on him."

"I'll bet you do at that."

"*Believe* me, Shayne!"

"What's this about a contract on anyone who talks to me?" the detective asked again.

"I got a call about an hour ago, Shayne. A man's voice. He said, 'If you talk to Mike Shayne, you're dead.'"

"What else?"

"He said—do I have to?"

"Keep talking."

"He said *you* were a dead man, Shayne—so help me!"

His mind moving at lightning speed, Mike Shayne thought that over. He felt quite certain the little man had told him all he knew. His terror had been too palpable to be faked. It was not the first time the redhead had been informed he was a walking corpse—and he was still walking.

It was, however, the first time anyone who talked to him was as good as in the grave. Or had the threat been confined to Al Loman merely because he had seen the man with the light colored mustache?

"Come on," the detective said, "let's go back inside and finish our drinks."

"Not me," the little man said, "I'm cutting out. I only hope to God nobody saw you talking to me."

"Okay, have it your way. You're sure there's nothing else you can tell me, Loman? Don't hold back."

"Nothing—so help me," the little man repeated, then hesitated.

"You remember something?" Shayne suggested.

Al Loman shook his head. "No," he said. "Nothing. Only..." he let it trail off.

"What is it, Al?" Shayne spoke softly, not wanting to alarm the little man again.

"Probably nothing. He looked replied. "But—oh, hell, I could have sworn I saw the man again today. It was on Collins Avenue." He paused.

"What is it?"

"Probably nothing. He looked different, that's all. I was driving. I only caught it for a second."

"The same man only different. Is that it?"

"So help me, Shayne. That's it."

XI

THE LITTLE MAN SCURRIED for his car around the corner in the parking lot. Moving cautiously after him, Mike Shayne saw him scramble into a white Mercury. He was in such a hurry to get out of there that he stalled twice before reaching the street—and by then the detec-

tive was behind the wheel of his Buick, prepared to pursue.

As Loman swung east, a dark Continental parked close to the corner fell in behind him and followed the little man when he turned right. The instant both were out of sight, the redhead put the Buick in motion. Traffic was light this late in the evening, and he did not turn on his headlights until he had cautiously followed them around another corner.

He had no desire to let whoever was in the larger car know he was being tailed.

Al Loman drove fast but well. He apparently did not become aware of the pursuit until he had rolled a couple of miles from the Five Aces. Then, suddenly, he gave his Mercury the gun and took the next corner on two wheels. The big car behind him barely made the turn, skidding with a screech of rubber that split the night.

Shayne followed more discreetly, discovered that he had lost half a block, was barely in time to see the Continental take a sharp left two crossings ahead. He gave his Buick the gun and set out to close the gap.

Despite the little man's obvious panic, the detective had taken his story with a large grain of salt—not that he thought Loman was lying, but

that some bluffer had scared the daylights out of him where one Mike Shayne was concerned.

It was now evident that somebody *was* after Loman with intent to do him harm. The hell of it was, from the redhead's viewpoint, he felt responsible for the little man's plight.

Twice, Shayne all but lost them completely—but both times managed to get back in the chase. The three-car procession rocketed through the dark avenues as if demons were after them. For once, the detective listened eagerly for the sound of a police siren—but no siren sounded.

Mike Shayne cut a corner, barely making it, just as, five hundred yards ahead, the Continental inched alongside its quarry and sought to crowd it into the curb.

To a crashing obligatto of flying trash cans knocked over by Loman's front bumper, the Mercury managed to pull ahead again as the little man jammed the excelerator to the floorboards. But it had been a close thing—too close for the detective's liking.

Removing the Colt .45 from his shoulder holster and thumbing the safety catch off, the redhead laid it across his thighs as he set about the business of

overtaking both cars, racing ahead of him.

It took him five more blocks—and was then made possible only by the fact that again the two cars ran abreast and were thus slowed down. Amid more screechings of tires and metal, they ground to a halt.

Shayne braked as he passed the locked cars and stopped just beyond them, skidding diagonally across the narrow residential drive and effectively blocking it.

Until then, apparently, neither driver had been aware that Mike Shayne was on their tail. When the detective swung his gun over the sill of the driver's window of the Buick, he saw Loman slouched behind the wheel of his stalled Mercury, either dazed or unconscious.

Another man was emerging from the driver's seat of the Continental, holding a long-barreled silenced automatic in his right hand.

"Hold it!" the redhead ordered. "Hold it *right there*, you bastard!"

The man's response was a bullet that whined right through both car windows, missing Shayne's left eartip by no more than a couple of inches. The detective felt the big Colt buck in his own hand as

he fired a pair of shots in return.

Neither shot hit its intended target. Reacting with amazing reflex speed, the would-be killer leapt back into his big car before Shayne's bullets found their mark. Both shots crashed into the hood of the Continental, but apparently neither damaged the motor inside.

With a further sound of rending metal, the driver backed clear of Loman's Mercury and continued in reverse right on down the street at a speed of at least fifty miles per hour.

By the time Shayne got the Buick turned around, the bigger car had whipped ahead to the right. The detective cut his headlights. He wanted very much to know where the bigger car was going and, to learn this, had to avoid all appearance of pursuit.

As he turned the corner, he spotted the Continental's tail-lights far ahead, Mike Shayne heard the growl of distant sirens and felt relief. At least the shots had alarmed somebody enough to call the police—which meant Al Loman would be taken care of if he were hurt.

If the little man were smart, the redhead thought, he would see to it that he was held in custody until the killer or killers were caught.



Shayne concentrated all his energies on keeping the bigger car in view. Not until they reached an area of heavier traffic, where he could use intervening cars as cover, did the detective again cut in his lights.

What in hell did the murderer or murderers think the little man knew that was important enough to mark him for slaughter? Unless Loman had held something back, either de-

liberately or through ignorance of its importance, he seemed to have little enough. He *had* seen the man with the blond mustache talking to Tony Morell aboard the Press yacht at the regatta—and evidently this still unidentified human agent *had* tried to push the sportswriter overboard.

Yet Loman had not been molested until this evening, when the killers evidently feared that Shayne would be after him. But what had the little man told him that he had not told Tim and the other reporters? Only that he *thought* he had seen the man again and that he looked in some way "different".

Shayne wished to hell he had gotten a good look at Loman's would-be assassin. The confusion, the darkness split by the glare of headlights, plus the fact the man had worn a snap-brim hat pulled well down over his face—all had made recognition or identification impossible.

But how, if it were the same man, was he "different"?

A good question but one thus far without an answer...

As the bigger car headed north by east, the city began to be left behind. Houses grew further and further apart and, to the right, Shayne could see occasional glimpses of Biscayne

Bay. The road began to wind, and the detective lost sight of his quarry when a high hedge, backed by a row of tall cypress trees cut off his view of the pavement ahead.

When he passed them, the Continental was no longer in sight.

Ahead of him, the road forked. If the detective took the right turn, he knew he would come to a marina within a quarter of a mile, guarded by a gate with a gatekeeper. The detective took the turn, halted before the link-steel barrier, identified himself and was informed by the uniformed security man that no other vehicle had come that way for the past half hour.

He turned around, went back to the fork and took the left turn. This road deteriorated a half mile further on, leading to another bayside development still under construction. There, behind a giant earth-moving tractor, he found the Continental—abandoned and empty.

Picking up the radio telephone in the Buick, Mike Shayne called Police Headquarters, gave a desk officer the big automobile's license number, was informed that it had been reported stolen earlier in the evening. The redhead gave its location, then got warily out of the Buick, gun in hand, locking it behind him.

Cautiously, he made his way toward the waterfront ahead, pausing frequently in covered spots to listen for sounds of human activity. For long eerie minutes, there was no indication of movement or sound.

Then the night silence was split by the sudden starting of a marine motor. Abandoning caution, Shayne raced toward the bay, stumbling over the uneven terrain in the darkness. Once, he almost fell on his face as he tripped over some loose lumber hidden by the shadow of a stack of bricks.

When Shayne finally reached a rude temporary wharf, the noise of the boat was receding and all he could see was a rapidly dwindling black spot at the apex of twin wakes. His quarry by then was well out of pistol range.

As the redhead drove past the fork in the road, he passed a police patrol car headed the other way to check out his report on the stolen Continental. Feeling thoroughly frustrated, Shayne went back to his apartment and, after downing a massive brandy and water, turned in for a few hours slumber.

XII

MIKE SHAYNE REACHED his Flagler Street office early the

next morning. Lucy was just settling down behind her desk and taking a sip of coffee poured from the thermos jug she had brought with her. He had her call the Sands East, but his elusive client had not returned to her suite.

"Damn!" said the redhead. "I hope Lamont's okay." He hesitated, then tugged at his left earlobe and added, "Lucy, I want you to check out the car rentals and see if she hired herself some wheels. Have them go back to the night before last. If you hit, get the license number and make of car. Paint job, too, if you can."

Lucy got busy and the detective went into his own office, but he was too restless to sit for long behind his desk. Instead, he went out for some breakfast.

When he got back, Lucy was still at it. As he paused and lifted an eyebrow, she looked up and said, "Have you any idea how many car rental agencies are listed in the Yellow Pages?"

"Stay with it, angel," Shayne told her. "She has to have wheels."

"Maybe she took a taxi," Lucy suggested. "Or maybe some friend loaned her a car."

"Don't think that hasn't occurred to me," the detective replied, "but a rental is our only hope."

"Leon Davies called, Michael. He's on his way in from the Beach."

"Maybe *he* knows where she is," Shayne said.

Davies arrived in half an hour. "I wish she'd show up," he said. He offered the detective a cigar, which the redhead refused, lit up and added, squinting through the smoke, "Shayne, how much do you know about this client of yours?"

"Her money's good." The detective studied his visitor, renewing his impression that, beneath an impeccably groomed exterior, lurked a formidable man.

Davies nodded, hesitated, apparently marshalling his thoughts. Then he said, "I got word from Baltimore yesterday that Tony Morell's widow flew down here. She was due in the night before last."

Shayne said nothing, waited him out.

"It occurs to me that both women vanished about the same time. Frankly, I'm worried. If the Morell woman knew anything about her husband's murder, her own life isn't worth *that!*"

Davies concluded with a pistol-sharp snap of his fingers.

"What about my client's life?" the redhead countered.

"Shayne, I don't know how much you know about the

background of this unfortunate affair, but I was close to Phil Morgan, and I assure you it is deadly."

"That much, I've gathered myself," said the detective.

"What it amounts to is a murder ring working inside of Eastern Shore Investment and Loan—of which I happen to be an officer. I was sent down here by Morgan to look into two things—the safety of Tony Morell and the activities of Phyllis Lamont."

"I was under the impression," said Shayne, "that Lamont was here on a very similar assignment."

Leon Davies smiled cynically, said, "That may well be—if Phil Morgan actually sent her here. Has it occurred to you that she might have been responsible for Morell's murder—and for those of Phil Morgan and the man who shot him? That *she* might have met Morell's widow and spirited her away? That Marilyn Morell might be dead and Lamont on the lam?"

Again the redhead let it hang, but this time he broke the silence. "Davies," he said, "one thing has puzzled me from the first—if Tony Morell's inherited money was not due to mature for fifteen years, whoever stands to profit from his murder is going to have to wait

one hell of a long time for the real loot."

"Not necessarily," Davies replied; "Morell's estate was set up as a spendthrift trust. In other words, he got an allowance out of it. Morell was not considered financially stable by the testator. But the proviso would not apply to his heir—or heiress in this case. Marilyn stood to inherit the bulk of the estate the moment her ex-husband died."

"I see." Shayne nodded. Then, "I'm surprised Morell didn't change his will after the divorce."

"He never got around to it," Davies assured him. "Another example of the financial irresponsibility that caused his uncle to set up a spendthrift trust."

"You're trying to tell me my client caused these deaths—and the earlier ones as well?"

"You know about them?" Davies lifted an eyebrow.

"Bill Masters, Lora Wingate, Mike Logan? I know about them. Lamont filled me in."

"She should know." There was a cutting edge in Davies' tone. "Who better?" Another pause, then, "Shayne, are you aware that your client is among Phil Morgan's chief beneficiaries?"

The detective shook his head, then said, "Suppose you're right

about my client—just how do you suppose she went about all these murders? It must have required quite a setup."

Davies shrugged. "I don't believe you are fully aware of Lamont's capabilities. She's a very—well, remarkable young woman."

"You feel she is behind these murders."

"Let's just say, I consider her the most likely candidate," said Leon Davies. "I hope you will bear it in mind when you resume contact with her. I only pray I'm wrong."

"Frankly," said the redhead, rising, "so do I."

As he departed, Shayne considered the possibility of his client as the villain in the piece. She could well have been with Tony Morell at the time of his death. He had only her word that she had left earlier. It was, he supposed, possible that she had set up Philip Morgan's death. But if so, why had she hired Mike Shayne and told him to meet her at the airport?

Had he been used as stage setting to reinforce her apparent innocence?

At the moment, he had no proof either way. He began to wonder about Al Loman and the man with the blond mustache who had, according to the frightened little man, been "the same but different" the second

time Loman spotted him—if, indeed, Loman had not been deceived by somebody else who resembled the wanted suspect.

Shayne got up and poured himself a belt of brandy from the half-empty bottle in the bottom drawer of the green filing cabinet. He put a couple of ice-cubes from the compact little office refrigerator in a tumbler, mixed himself an on-the-rocks drink and had just settled back at his desk when Lucy entered. The bright look of triumph on her pretty face assured him that she had struck pay dirt.

"Alpha-Omega Car Rentals," she said. "About six p.m., the night before last. A Camaro, blue with a white stripe." She reeled off the seven digits of the license number, placed the message, neatly typed, on Shayne's desk blotter.

"Thanks, angel." He leaned forward to plant a kiss on her soft lips across the desk. "I owe you a dinner for that."

"I'll make sure it's collected." She swung out of the room with light steps.

Shayne tugged at his earlobe. The smart thing to do would be to let the police look for the Camaro—but he was not at all sure he wanted the law's heavy hand at his elbow in this stage of the case. A pattern was shaping in the back of his mind but

its outlines were far from distinct.

XIII

HE DECIDED TO PLAY a hunch first. Memory of last night's action was nagging at him. He was quite certain that his client had picked up Marilyn Morell at the airport the night before last and driven her somewhere in the rented car. There were, he thought, three possible reasons for her not getting back in touch.

She might, of course, be what Leon Davies had suggested—the person behind the murders. In that case, she could have eliminated Marilyn and taken off herself for parts unknown. Or she might be dead herself, her body buried at sea or in the trackless swampland west of the city.

Or she might not have called him because she had taken the ex-wife somewhere with no available telephone . . .

This was the possibility the redhead decided to explore first, before calling on Len Sturgis and his Homicide boys for help.

There had to be well calculated motive behind the destination of the car he had pursued in the early hours of the morning. It had not been a random flight that merely happened to come to a dead end at

he marina under construction. In the first place, his quarry had not been aware of pursuit until the destination was almost reached. In the second, the motor launch must have been awaiting him.

This suggested to Shayne that whoever he pursued had to have a good idea of where he was heading, and presumably why.

What more likely place for Phyllis Lamont and Marilyn Morell to take refuge in—a place without telephonic communication—than a boat? And what more likely place to find a boat than a marina?

"Hold the fort, angel," he told Lucy as he passed her on his way out of the office.

Driving northward again, the detective had two ideas very much in mind. The elusive man with the blond mustache was still at large and whoever he had chased to the water's edge must have some idea where Phyllis Lamont and Marilyn were hiding—else why the waiting motorboat?

When Shayne reached the fork in the road, he took the left turn again. He wanted to look over in daylight the marina under construction. Evidently there had been some sort of builders' delay, for the site was as idle as it had been in the early morning. The Con-



tinental was gone, evidently towed away by the police.

Shayne parked and locked the Buick, then walked over the rough and littered construction area to the water's edge. The only creatures that moved were a few seagulls disturbed raucously by his passage. There was a motor launch moored to the makeshift pier.

The redhead hunkered down to examine it. At that instant a bullet whistled above him—in the exact spot his head had been a moment before. Mike Shayne slid down the rest of the way, drawing his Colt as he did so, twisting so that, when he reached the shelter the launch offered, he would be facing his would-be assassin.

He caught just a glimpse of movement as whoever it was disappeared behind a pile of lumber—it was too fleeting and too far away for accurate shooting with the detective's automatic. While he crouched there, seeking a better target, he considered his own position.

It was not a pleasant one. The area was so isolated that he doubted the shot would be heard by anyone else—or, if heard, acted upon. His assistant had all sorts of cover, while Shayne could either cower helplessly in the boat or be exposed to the fire of a longer range weapon.

There was a third alternative—if he could get the launch started, he might be able to get out of range and cruise to safety. Keeping well below the level of the pier, he moved forward to the cockpit. The ignition was locked.

Shayne turned and, holding his pistol ready, risked another look toward his assailant. He caught sight of a man running from the pile of lumber toward a pile driver fifty feet closer to the pier. The detective got a shot off, heard it *spang* against the heavy metal of the pile driver and ricochet with a whine.

Then he got busy with the ignition wiring under the dashboard of the launch, hoping

he could get the vessel going in time. Shayne worked swiftly, deftly, made the connection before he risked another look at his attacker.

The man was still out of sight and Shayne swung into the pilot's seat and pressed the starter button on the floor. The engine coughed, sputtered, then roared into life. The redhead cast off, keeping on the move while exposed above pier level, making himself as elusive a target as possible.

Even so, he narrowly missed being drilled by a bullet that fluttered the air by his scalp. He fired a single shot at the flash, then huddled low in the cockpit as the launch roared away from the makeshift pier.

Three other bullets sped past him before the firing from the shore stopped. The detective looked over his shoulder at the receding shore line as his attacker abandoned all concealment. He was wearing dark glasses and, from that distance, Mike Shayne could not determine whether he wore a mustache or not.

The launch coughed and sputtered again and then died, leaving him drifting at the mercy of the lazy current.

It occurred to Shayne that the sniper must have used up most of his gas during the run of the night before, that he had

probably abandoned the pier to procure more fuel and returned to find the detective ahead of him.

This, he decided, was hardly a time for such speculation. The tide was coming in, the wind, while low, was onshore. The combination meant that the redhead was being carried slowly but inevitably back within range of his would-be assassin.

To the south lay a wooded point, beyond it the other marina, a good three quarters of a mile away. There was only one thing for it—he was going to have to swim. In a locker under one of the passengers' benches along the cockpit sides, the redhead found an oilcloth tool bag. Emptying it of assorted wrenches and drills, he removed his holster and gun and put them inside. There was enough room for his shoes and slacks as well. Stripping to his shorts and shirt, Shayne managed to hang the bag by its drawstring around his neck.

Then he went over the side and struck up a steady stroke to carry himself through the water to safety. . . .

The bag hung heavy around his neck, forcing him to turn over from time to time while floating on his back. Once around the tip of the point, the tidal current helped him and he

waded ashore to get his first good look at the marina.

Shayne understood then the problem facing anyone who wished to find a particular person on an unspecified yacht. There had to be close to a hundred pleasure craft of all styles and sizes parked in the sheltered water of the marina, ranging from stately ocean-going yachts to perky little fishing boats.

If his client was holed up in one of them . . . which?

XIV

MIKE SHAYNE TOOK a few minutes on the narrow beach of the point to regain his breath and let his shorts and shirt partially dry out. Then, donning slacks and shoes, carrying the .45 and holster in the oilcloth bag, he strolled along the widening sand strip toward the marina.

He was halted by a security guard at the gate in the link-steel fence that ran well out into the water, a burly ex-cop named Pete Lucas, who greeted Shayne with a lopsided grin of welcome.

"Next time you go swimming," Lucas suggested, "why don't you wear a swimsuit?"

The detective fished out his wallet from a rapidly dampening pants pocket, pulled out a

twenty and said, "Pete, I need some information."

After learning what the redhead wanted, Lucas said, "If you'll mind the store here, I'll get it for you."

Shayne nodded toward the boxed phone attached to the chain fence just inside the gate, said, "I'd like to make a couple of calls."

"Be my guest—as long as it's not San Francisco," the security guard replied and took off along the beach toward the marina clubhouse.

The detective called his office, learned that Phyllis Lamont was still incommunicado, then dialed Tim and asked him to pick him up at the marina entrance. "The case is on the verge of busting wide open," he assured the reporter.

Pete Lucas came back a few minutes later, said, "The blue rental Camaro has been in the parking lot for almost forty-eight hours."

"Is she assigned to any one yacht?" Shayne asked.

"The Mari III," Lucas replied. "Funny thing—the desk man told me another man was in asking about yachts with Baltimore registry . . . just a few minutes ahead of me. He got the same info."

"Did you get a make on him, Pete?"

"Not too much—just that he

was a big chunky man, middle aged—and he was expensively dressed."

Shayne nodded, frowning as he thought, wondering if it was Leon Davies, why it had taken him so long to get around to the inquiry—unless Davies was right about Lamont being the killer. He doubted Davies had followed the car-rental line of inquiry.

"Anything else, Shayne?" the guard inquired.

"Not now. You've done great. Just point me toward the main gate. I'm being picked up in a little while."

Twenty minutes later, Tim Rourke rattled up in his old Ford. The redhead gave him a cursory account of recent events as they drove back to the fork and headed for the unfinished new marina. Meanwhile he donned his shoulder holster and reloaded his Colt. At the entrance, Shayne told the reporter to stop.

"This could get rough," he warned. "There's no sense in your risking your scrawny neck."

"You think I'm chicken?" Rourke asked.

"Yes."

"You know, you could be right, Mike. Okay, I'll wait for you right here."

"Keep your motor running, just in case . . ." the redhead

varned as he got out of the veteran car.

He moved cautiously toward the parked Buick, making use of every available bit of cover. But no rifle shots barked, no bullets whined close to his head this time. By the time he got his car unlocked, he decided the place was deserted. He wondered about the jacket he had left in the abandoned launch, decided to let it go.

It was too late to return to the office, so Shayne went home to his hotel apartment. There he stripped off his wet clothing, dried himself and changed—he donned swim trunks, a dark pullover shirt and dark slacks, loafers instead of regular shoes. If he had to take to the water again, he meant to be ready for it.

Then, after pouring himself a drink and lighting a cigaret, the detective sat down in his living room and dialed a waterfront number on the north side of the city.

"Bill," he said when the call was answered, "I want to rent a small motorboat . . ."

Shayne might not yet know the identity of the man who had shot at him, but he had a fair idea of his plan of campaign. The fact that he had a launch at the unfinished marina, that he had used it last night—had undoubtedly re-

gained it with the tide, certainly refueled it by now—suggested that he planned to use it again.

That this unidentified person had inquired, as to boats of Baltimore registry at the inhabited marina suggested to the redhead that, next time he took to the water, this person would know which yacht to head for.

It seemed highly unlikely to the detective that the next move would come before dark—his progress and behavior could be recognized by too many potential witnesses in this crowded waterway—to say nothing of his identity.

It was the redhead's intention to reach the Mari III just as night was beginning to fall . . .

Locating the Mari III by night proved more difficult than Shayne had expected. Pete Lucas had pointed out the yacht for him that afternoon—just two yachts north of the largest craft in the Marina—a graceful white ocean-going diesel burner with gleaming mahogany upper works. But there were scores of white hulls among the 100-plus assemblage of pleasure vessels anchored in the marina, and their relative size was masked not only by the darkness but by the flickering glow of cabin lights and water reflections.

Although Mike Shayne had

left a small jetty two miles south of the marina at eight-thirty, planning to be aboard the Mari III shortly after nine, it was close on ten o'clock when he rounded the stern of the Mari III and identified her by the letters painted there, white on black.

He had cut the outboard motor as he came close to the moored vessels and was using the oars to make a more silent approach—another factor that delayed him.

The companionway was down to the water's surface, and the detective's heart leapt high when he scraped against another launch tethered there. Somebody else had got to the Mari III ahead of him.

The detective moored his rented craft to the rail, then stepped aboard the platform at the foot of the companionway and, with drawn pistol, made his way up the steps, silent as a large cat. Lights shone from cabin windows and Shayne slid from one to another, crouching low as he passed each window after peering inside.

Voices reached him—a man's low and commanding words, a woman's gasp of fright. Moving two more windows toward the stern, the detective looked within and saw his client, her blonde hair flowing free, a telephone in her left hand as

she stared over her right shoulder—looking at Leon Davies, who stood stocky and grim of face in the doorway behind her, a silenced automatic in his right fist.

There was no time for weighty considerations, for speculation on the best course to pursue.

Davies said, "Put the phone down, Phyllis. It's not going to help."

Mike Shayne shot the gun out of Davies' hand. The force of the high-caliber bullet threw the investment company executive back against the door jamb behind him and blood spurted from his mangled mitt. Uttering a cry alarm, the stocky man bounced from the door's edge and hurled himself out of the detective's limited range of vision.

The redhead reached the cabin door just as Davies leapt through the opposite door to the port deck. He fired again, hitting him in the back of a knee and bringing him crashing to the deckboards.

Shayne turned right, leaving him there, picked up the silenced pistol and said to Phyllis Lamont, "Are you okay?"

She looked bewildered, replied, "Shayne! But how the hell? I was just calling your apartment."

"I couldn't wait," the redhead

told her. "Where is Marilyn Morell?"

Lamont nodded toward the next cabin forward. "In there," she said. "Full of valium. She tried to kill herself."

"Get Harbor Patrol," the detective told her. He went back to Leon Davies, who was still lying prone in the doorway, a widening pool of blood under his body.

He regained consciousness while the detective was rigging an impromptu tourniquet around his left thigh, groaned and said, "Why not just let me die, Shayne? It was so damn close!"

"You'll live to cost the taxpayers a lot of loot, Davies," the redhead reminded the murderer grimly as he completed the task of checking the major flow of blood.

From outside, a searchlight played about the cabin and a voice through a bullhorn called, "Any trouble?"

"It's all over," Mike Shayne said, rising to his feet. "Come aboard."

It was three a.m. by the time the detective got his client back to the Sands East. At the entrance, she said, "I'm too uptight to sleep, Shayne. Come on up for a belt."

When they were once again settled in front of her coffee table, cigarets lighted and glasses

in hand, he said, "Lamont, can I ask one question?"

"Fire away."

"Why in hell didn't you call me sooner?"

"Because I didn't want to use the phone. It kept ringing off and on during the last thirty hours, and I was sure it was our murderer. If I used the phone and he caught a busy signal, he'd know I was aboard."

The detective ran a thumbnail along the edge of his jaw, said, "How in hell did he trace you to the Mari Three?"

"That was easy—it belongs to one of Uncle Phil's partners. I guess Leon checked out every yacht in the basin."

"How come you didn't spot him cruising around?"

"Oh, I saw him—but I didn't recognize him. I didn't even know who he was when he walked into the cabin waving that damned pistol."

"How come?"

"The Leon Davies I'd met in Baltimore wore a blond mustache," Lamont told him. "I guess he shaved it off."

"I guess he did—after he was seen with Tony Morell on the Press boat at the regatta last week." A pause, then, "Lamont, if you knew it was Davies, why didn't you tell me or the police?"

"But I *didn't* know. I thought

Uncle Phil sent him down to help me look into Tony's murder. Uncle Phil must have put it together and called Davies and smelled something. That had to be what brought him to Miami."

"He evidently tipped his hand to Davies," The detective lit a fresh cigaret. "So Leon was the man with the mustache. I was getting surer and surer that he didn't exist."

Lamont said, "Poor Uncle Phil!" Then regarding the red-head a long moment, "Shayne, you'll never know how glad I was to see you walk into that cabin this evening. I'd given myself about five seconds more to live. Thank God, Uncle Phil told me to hire you!"

"Another question," said Shayne.

"Fire away."

"Lamont, just how in hell was this whole thing supposed to work? I mean, where was the profit?"

"Why do you think I picked up Marilyn Morell at the airport and brought her here? It was driving Uncle Phil nuts. From what she told me, plus what I already knew, I got most of the picture."

A thought-marshalling pause, then, "As a top executive in ESIL, Leon had every channel of information on the investors

open to him. He would find a beneficiary of one of our large accounts—someone in a financial hole—and approach him. He'd offer to guarantee him in advance on the principal for a percentage of the whole. There was always a contract signed.

"Then he'd have the intended investor removed—always 'accidentally', of course—and only then would the new beneficiary discover a fine-print paragraph admitting guilt in the death. Leon had his victims locked in at thirty-three percent for himself. Drawing a one-third cut of a number of seven-figure estates runs to rather a comfortable income."

"And safe as houses," Shayne mused, "until his try on Tony fouled up and got you, Tony and Philip Morgan suspicious."

"He'd still have made it if it weren't for you, Shayne."

Lamont rose, went to a desk that stood against the wall, sat down and wrote a check. According to their verbal agreement, she was to pay him three thousand, for a total of five, when the case was completed. The check she wrote was for eight thousand.

Handing it to him, she said, "Enjoy it—you've earned it twice over."

"It was rough—while it lasted," he told her.

It was Dave's first delivery for Easy Tom and two goons were after the 50-G roll in his coat pocket.

Cool Dave Burgess

by MAX F. HARRIS

DAVE BURGESS THREW his quick gray eyes back and forth across the dark, drizzle-swept sidewalk and quickened his pace. Now just keep cool, he told himself, knocking some of the drizzle off his narrow forehead and shiny, frizzled black hair. That's why you're here.

It was his first mission for Easy Tom Norris—\$50,000 lumped out at his chest inside his buttoned-down, green-checked sport coat—and he'd tramped less than a block along the ocean boulevard when he



picked up the sound of footsteps echoing in the darkness behind him.

Now he'd gone two blocks under the wet glimmering crêpe myrtle trees that were losing their fire-red blooms to autumn's first chilly wind and rain. The ocean roared off to his right beyond the high-rises, the shadowed motels, the street-front restaurants and deep parking lots. Above the din of the ocean's pounding, thunderous roar, he heard the sound of the shoes and glanced back over his shoulder, straining his eyes.

He saw only slashes of red crêpe swirling through the drizzle and blowing along the sidewalk. But, twisting his head around, he knew someone was back there in the deep shadows somewhere, somebody who knew the boulevard. Above the din of the ocean, he heard the hish-hish of shoes. They slowed when he slowed, picked up when he picked up.

He flexed his broad shoulders, locked his stout clean-shaven jaws, squeezed his bicep against the blunt-nosed .32 automatic under his left armpit and tramped on under the glimmering crêpe myrtles, keeping his cool—but dropping into a shoulder crouch and quickening his pace even more.

"Here, Burgess," Easy Tom had said, clamping moist lips down on his gold-plated cigaret holder and tossing up smoke

plumes from his glistening mahogany desk. "Catch."

Easy Tom's thin, slightly-talcumed face broke into a grin. "Callie just phoned. A couple of guys are on a hot streak in the twenty-one corner down there. He wants this bundle quick."

Easy Tom tossed an envelope bulging with bills through the tobacco plumes up at Dave.

Dave speared the envelope like a baseball, shoved it inside his sport coat and nodded. Callie's was just one of Easy Tom's places along the ocean boulevard—the spot where Dave first met Easy Tom after turning down jacks full over sixes, not because he figured that the house guy across the green felt had him beat but because his cache was gone and he'd learned during the summer what Easy Tom's boys did to welchers.

Easy Tom approached him on his own, told him he'd been watching him, said he liked his cool and added with a grin that the house guy had been filled with cowboys over mop-squeezers.

Then, just three days before, Easy Tom buttonholed him at Callie's, pulled him into an office, ordered highballs and said that he expected heavy action on the strand when the summer-timers headed home.

Easy Tom added that he

could use a cool new hand, that he had run a check on Dave Burgess all the way down to Lauderdale and had found him to be straight from top to bottom.

Dave had jumped at the job. His luck during the summer had been rotten. And he'd always figured that there was lots more in running the games than in bucking them. Now, he figured, if he played it right, some day *he* could have an office with a shiny mahogany desk, gold-framed pictures, black-leather wall furniture, a blue carpet that tickled your ankles—and a room-and-bar behind the desk like Easy Tom for the bikini clads.

Dave had patted the lump on his chest. "I got you, chief."

Easy Tom grinned and waved him off with his glittering cigaret holder. "Come on back when you've delivered the G's to Callie. There are a couple of things we've got to do tonight."

The corners of Dave's lips turned up. "I'll be back in no time, chief."

Above the din of the ocean, the hish-hish of the shoes grew. Dave stepped up his pace even more. There were all kinds of beach bums and poor losers who watched Easy Tom's spots closer than the cops. Damn! He wished the stack of bills hadn't stuck out on his chest like a

light bulb when he left Easy Tom's main club. He wiped sweat off his lips.

Easy, easy, he told himself. *Keep the cool*. There was the barest chance that he wasn't being followed. In the middle of the block, a restaurant's purple canopy lit up a strip of the sidewalk like Christmas.

When he reached the canopy, Dave breathed deeply and cut inside the restaurant. He stepped to the cashier's counter at the right, asked for a pack of filter-tips, hung his chin under his shoulder and peered at the block of light under the canopy.

In moments, two men who looked like wrestlers—one tall, broad and powerfully-built, the other squat, broad and powerfully-built—stepped into the block of light. They jerked battered hats down over their eyes, tramped through the light, stepped back into darkness and were gone.

Dave broke open the filter-tips, fired one, blew out the smoke and felt a little better when he stepped out on the sidewalk under the canopy. He looked down toward Callie's, which sat down the boulevard less than four blocks away. He saw nothing but dim drizzle and exhaled more smoke, breathing easier.

But less than fifty yards past the restaurant, he heard the

hish-hish again. He stole a glance over his shoulder. The two men were easing out of the shadows of a motel parking lot and falling in behind him. His heart jumped. No mistaking now. He stepped up his pace.

He figured he could hail a cab. But when he looked for one, he saw only empty boulevard. Foul-weather riders had grabbed all the cabs. He wondered how and where the two guys expected to jump him. They looked like they needed money bad—worse, one looked like an overgrown gorilla and the other a walking safe.

After taking a deep breath, he thought it through. After all, he was now one of Easy Tom's men—hand-picked by the chief because of his cool and know-how. He figured that maybe he could handle one of the goons, but not both. Damn!

He could slosh pell-mell down the boulevard, shouting. But what good would that do? The goons could shoot or maybe run him down. The cops would converge on the party and he'd have a gambling joint's \$50,000 to explain. He frowned. He could duck in the shadows, jerk out his .32 and start blasting. But, again—it was an open invitation for the fuzz to join the party.

A solution struck him like lightning. In the next block a

new brick high-rise was going up. He'd been watching it rise the past month. The steel girders were already up, and enough bricks to re-do the Washington Monument were piled about and among them. If the two men followed him into the frame of that high-rise, they'd get a brick reception.

He tramped briskly through the drizzle. He was cool, he told himself. He strode with shoulders up along the sidewalk in the next block, aware of the scurry of feet behind him.

Suddenly, he cut sharply, raced past a couple of black masses of bricks and ducked into the skeleton of the high rise. The drizzle floated down among the girders, which rose out of sight in the darkness. Bricks loomed up in masses everywhere. Dave slid behind a pile of them that topped his head, stooped over noiselessly, scooped up two bricks and straightened. Waiting, hidden behind the bricks, not thirty yards from the sidewalk, he felt his heart begin to pound.

"Did you see him, Fats?" The rasping, guttural voice sounded right outside the girders.

"Sure, Pete." A high-toned wincing voice. "He ran right between these two piles of bricks."

"Okay. Come on!"

Dave heard the quick heavy

tread of footsteps coming toward him. Then silence. He peered from behind the pile of bricks, sweating, his hands locked around the two wet bricks he'd scooped up. The two men stood beside a wet, shimmering girder within the skeleton of the high rise, in dark silhouette, looking. Dave's heart thumped.

"He ain't in here, Pete," the squat one said.

"Where else could he be?" the big one said.

"Look for yourself."

"Whaddaya think I'm doing, Fats? He must have figured something."

The squat one exhaled. "Let's let him go, Pete."

"He ain't making no monkey out of me," the big one rasped. "Thinks he's wise."

"You ain't just a-birding there," the squat guy said. "I told you he was wise to us when he cut into that restaurant."

"The hell he was, Fats! He'd a-stayed there if he'd known we was on him."

"He just weren't sure, Pete."

"Ha!"

"Well, not so loud, anyway, Pete." The squat one tugged at the big one's coat sleeve. "I say let him go."

"Hell, no," the big one rasped, jerking his arm away from his companion. "That

bundle looks like a spotlight on his chest. He's lucky he got this far down the boulevard without a rumble."

"What are you going to do then?"

"Just come on."

The two men moved straight toward Dave's corner. When they reached the pile of bricks, Dave sprang from behind it and bounced a brick with a loud crunch off the big one's head before he could open his mouth. The man collapsed like a sack of sand.

Before Dave got his other brick against the walking safe's head, a .38 appeared out of the darkness. As Dave's brick crashed against the man's skull, the gun fired upward. The blast rolled like thunder as the slug whistled up through the girders. The squat man fell with a thud beside his dark still-as-stone partner, his .38 spewing against bricks with a clatter.

Damn! Dave thought, jerking his wrist across his lips. That shot was the worst thing that could have happened. Cops would be crawling about the high-rise like cockroaches in no time. His hand dug inside his sport coat, his wet fingers searching. The fat envelope was in place.

He glanced down through the mist at the dark bodies, leaped

over them and ran toward the sidewalk, slipping and sliding. He fell over a pile of bricks he didn't see, scrambled up, checked the hump at his chest, rushed to the sidewalk and peered toward Callie's.

Damn! A beach cop was racing his way, pistol out and glimmering in the drizzle. Dave swirled around, his eyes as big as saucers. *Damn!* A gray squad car's glaring headlights were slanting through the crêpe myrtles and glistening along the sidewalk.

Dave whirled and bolted back inside the black girders of the high-rise. Maybe he could get through the maze and make it along the beach to Callie's while the cops scratched their heads over the goons. But there was no way through the bricks. Masses were stacked high everywhere. He wheeled around, jumped behind a shoulder-high stack and looked, snatching out his .32.

The squad car's spotlight lit up the drizzle at the curb. Two cops came out of it with .45's drawn. They turned, crouched, passed masses of bricks and crept among the girders, separating and hugging the shadows.

"All right!" one of them shouted. "Come on out with your hands up and there'll be no trouble."

Dave's heart thumped. The cop, no more than twenty yards away, was a sitting duck for his blunt-nose .32, which was zeroed in on the weathered, cowhide-tough face just beneath the glistening visor.

"Other officers are coming!" the cop shouted. "You're going to leave this high-rise toes up if you don't show your face."

Even with his .32 ready to spit, Dave felt like a cornered bull. *Easy, easy!* he thought. *Keep it cool.* The cops were only doing their duty. They'd have no more idea the \$50,000 belonged to Easy Tom than the man in the moon.

They'd never find it out from him, because it was common knowledge along the strand that Easy Tom was in trouble with the internal revenue boys up to his eyeballs. And he was one of Easy Tom's boys, cool, hand-picked. Easy Tom was waiting for him in his plush office.

Dave straightened up, stuck the .32 inside his sport coat and shouted, "Okay, officer." He stepped from behind the stack of bricks.

The cop threw the glare of a flashlight on him. "Just come on over here." The cop straightened up—a big man with wide shoulders and a thick neck. He started toward Dave as the beach cop eased out of

the shadows and fell in behind.

The cop with the .45 tripped over Pete's big body, caught his balance and turned his flash toward the ground. "What's this? Oh! And this? Two of them!" The flash swung up into Dave's face. "Damn. Who are you?"

"Dave Burgess. I beat those guys to the jump."

"Grab some drizzle," the cop growled.

Dave's hands shot up. "I'm sure glad to see you guys, officer."

While the beach cop held a steady black snout on him, the thick-necked one put away his flash and .45, frisked Dave quickly and jerked out the .32 and the bundle of bills. He tossed the .32 to the beach cop, tipped up his visor and squinted inside the bulging envelope, his thick thumb scraping slowly across and separating the edges of the bills. He whistled.

"Thousands!" he blurted, carefully sticking the puffed envelope into the side pocket of his coat. He squinted through the drizzle at Dave. "All that money yours?"

"Yes, sir," Dave said.

The cop nodded, looked back over his shoulder, raised his

arm at the squad car and flicked his hand. The spotlight swung through the bricks and girders. The cop stepped to the bodies and stooped over them, looking. They were both laid out face up. The big guy stirred, scrambling up on an elbow and grunting.

"Damn!" the cop said, his mouth popping open. "Pete Minton and Fats Howard." He straightened up, stepped back a pace and glanced at the beach cop, whose pistol was still levelled on Dave. "They'll come to. You couldn't hurt that pair with an atomic blast." He looked at Dave, his eyes narrow. "You handled that pair by yourself?"

"Yes, sir." Dave grinned. The roaring of the ocean sounded like music behind his back.

"I'll see that you get a medal pinned to you, then," the bull-necked cop said, a glint of admiration in his eyes. He turned his head and stared down at the big guy, who was rubbing the side of his face. "Pete," he said, scratching his chin. "Do you and Fats still work for Easy Tom?"

"Sure," Pete rasped, hooking his thumb at Dave. "He sent us behind this guy to baby him through his first little job."

THE LAST DAYS OF AL CAPONE

by DAVID MAZROFF

It took two departments of the United States Government to put Al Capone behind Federal bars. It took the combined efforts of the best legal brains to keep him there. It was largely because of "Big Al" that the island rock prison of Alcatraz was built.

AL CAPONE WAS a king. He owned the second largest city in the United States. He had the police, public officials, district attorneys, judges, the mayor, senators and representatives in his pockets. When he fell, not one of the men to whom he had paid tribute for a decade could help him.

According to the best sources of information, President Herbert Hoover ordered the attack on Capone. He had heard much about the Chicago gang chief-tain that infuriated him. He couldn't understand why Capone wasn't in jail.

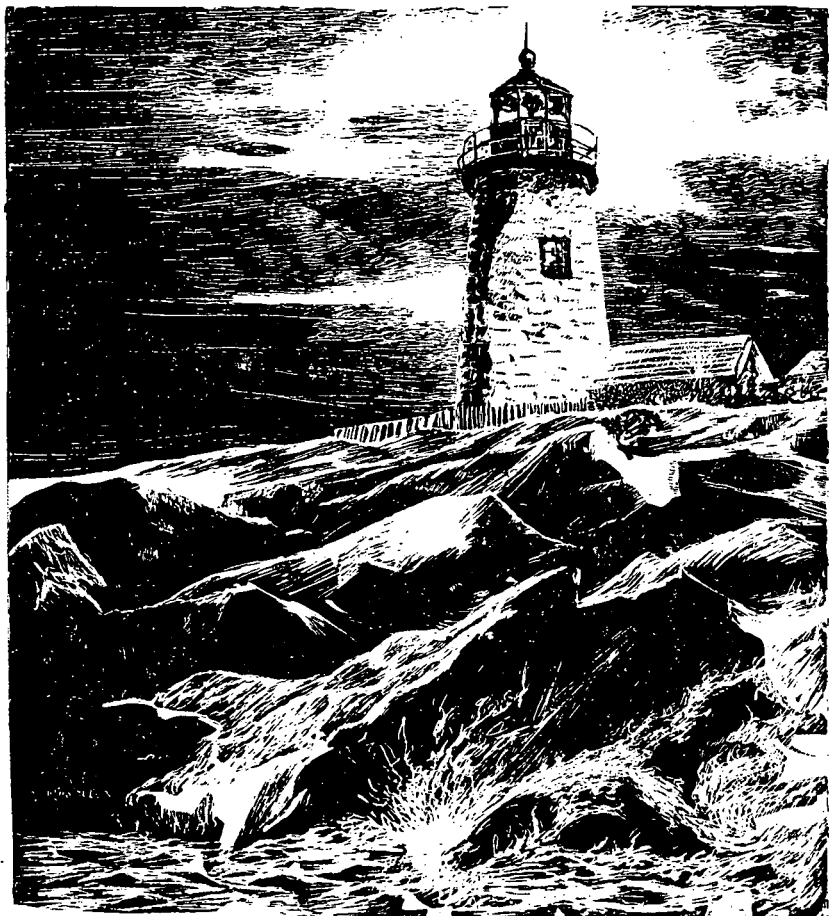
President Hoover's move against the Chicago gang chief

came about largely as a result of Chicago *Daily News* publisher Frank Knox's visit to the White House.

Knox told Hoover, "Neither city or state authorities will make any sort of move against Capone. He has corrupted nearly every public official in Chicago, and a lot more in Springfield. Since none of these will do anything about this hoodlum, I am asking you, sir, to set the Federal Government's forces in action."

The President was thoughtful. "Has he violated any Federal statute that you know of on which he could be prosecuted?"

A NEW TRUE CRIME MAFIA STORY



"Well, he's a bootlegger. That's a violation of the Eighteenth Amendment. And, so far as I know, from information gathered by my investigative reporters, Capone has never filed an income-tax return in his life. That's income-tax evasion."

"True," President Hoover replied. "But can it be proved? With evidence and testimony that will convince a jury?"

"I think so."

"Let me look into the matter. If I find that evidence can be produced to substantiate charges of income-tax evasion I shall order prosecution to be instituted against Capone."

Several weeks later, President Hoover instructed Andrew Mellon, then Secretary of the Treasury, to "look into the matter of this Chicago gangster, Al Capone." It was a fateful order that set in motion the downfall of America's most notorious mobster.

Unaware that he was now the object of a Federal effort to put him in prison, Capone went about his business of bootlegging, racketeering and issuing orders for the execution of rival hoods who threatened either to muscle in on his territory or to kill him. Capone was shrewd, an organizer of infinite talent, surrounded by an inner circle of lieutenants who were as intel-

ligent as he in many areas involving underworld activities.

Still, he trusted no one completely. He once said, "The only honest face I ever saw was on a dog, and I kept that one on a leash."

Andrew Mellon went to the Attorney General, who chose Eliot Ness for the task of gathering the necessary evidence against Capone. Ness and his Department of Justice raiders decided on a double-barreled attack. One, to wreck Capone financially by destroying his warehouses, laden with illegal liquor, and his breweries, manufacturing illegal beer. Two, assistance by the Internal Revenue agents to send him to prison for income-tax evasion.

The men selected by Ness had impeccable reputations for honesty. The original Prohibition Enforcement Unit was untrained and ill-paid. During its first seven years under the Treasury Department, hundreds of Prohibition agents took bribes in order to make ends meet under the prevailing economy. They thus were easy targets for every bootlegger in the nation.

Ness knew this and recognized the venality of the agents as an expedience as he deplored the practice. Thus came into being THE SPECIAL PROHIB-

ITION DETAIL. And with it, CASE JACKET SI-7085-F, the file on Al Capone.

Ness consulted with Elmer L. Irey, head of the Internal Revenue's Enforcement Branch. Irey informed Ness that he was on solid ground, that if Ness' detail gathered sufficient evidence to justify a conviction of income-tax evasion, "You can put Capone away in prison."

Irey told Ness, "In 1927, the Supreme Court handed down a decision in an appeal case against a bootlegger named Manley Sullivan. Sullivan had not filed a tax return because, as he claimed in his petition, income from illegal transactions was not taxable. Furthermore, declaring such income would be self-incriminatory under the structure of the Fifth Amendment.

The Supreme Court ruled against Manley Sullivan.

"We," the ruling declared, "find no reason why the fact that a business is unlawful should exempt it from paying taxes that, if lawful, it would have to pay. As for self-incrimination, it would be an extreme if not extravagant application of the Fifth Amendment to say that it authorized a man to refuse to state the amount of his income because it had been made in crime."



AL CAPONE

Irey handed Ness a file. "We're going after the men in that file. First, Terry Druggan and Frank Lake, partners, who have been operating on the West Side in Chicago, between Little Italy and Cicero. They run the Valley gang. They're an odd pair, a couple of comics. They're not dangerous, personally, but they have a few hoods around who are.

"When we send those two to jail the gang will disintegrate. Druggan and Lake deal strictly in beer. They sell enough of it, however, to merit our attention. In your efforts against Capone, you might also want to give a

little of your attention to those two gentlemen. Smash their trucks, break up their breweries and warehouses. My unit will do the rest."

Druggan and Lake were duly convicted and, in 1932, Federal Judge James H. Wilkerson sentenced Druggan to a term of two and a half years, and Lake to a term of eighteen months.

Ness, in the meantime, went after Capone in earnest. Trucks were hijacked and impounded. Breweries were destroyed, warehouses stripped of their wares. Capone was furious and ordered Eliot Ness killed. He put a price of fifty-thousand dollars on his head.

He said, "I'll add another twenty thousand to the guy who brings me his head!" He pounded the desk with a heavy fist. "That bastard has cost me a million dollars already and he's not stopping." He pointed a finger at Jack McGurn. "You, can't you get him?"

McGurn nodded. "Yeah, I can get him, if someone will set him up. What do you want me to do, Al, walk into his office and kill him? Or maybe send him an invitation to meet me on a dark street corner at midnight?"

"He's surrounded by a dozen heavily armed agents, day and night, Al," Frank Nitti said.

"Okay," Capone snapped.

"But he goes home, doesn't he? Where does he live?"

Nitti shrugged. "Nobody knows. He takes a different route every time. Four cars. Parked in an under-cover garage, and at a certain spot they go in four different directions. What car is he in?" Nitti shrugged again. "Who knows?"

"So, dammit, have four cars trail their four cars!" Capone ordered.

Sam Hunt shook his head. "They'll spot us, Al."

"What does he want?" Capone asked. "How much?" Everybody's on the take. Offer him a hundred thousand, two hundred thousand, to lay off."

"No good, Al," McGurn said. "This guy is not on the take. He has orders to put you out of business. That's the word from downtown."

Capone still was ignorant of the fact that Ness' raids were merely one side of the attack, that the other side, the important one, was to put him in prison and so destroy him as an influence in the Chicago he had painted red with the blood of hundreds of victims.

Elmer Irey was giving his attention to Ralph "Bottles" Capone, Al's older brother. Bottles wasn't as shrewd as Al, nor was he as discreet. He was an easy mark. Ralph was convicted. Judge Wilkerson fined

Ralph Capone \$10,000 and sentenced him to three years in prison. This should have told Al Capone that a plan was in progress, as McGurn had said, to put him out of business. He refused to believe it.

A LOT OF BUNK

"THE INCOME-TAX LAW is a lot of bunk. How the hell can the government collect taxes from illegal money, illegal business? It makes them a partner, dammit!" He obviously had not heard of, or been told about, what his lawyers should have told him—the United States Supreme Court's ruling on the Sullivan case.

Irey found Fred Ries, a bookkeeper who had worked for Capone in Cicero's gambling joints. Ries proved to be the turning point in the Government's efforts to put Al Capone behind bars. He needed a lot of persuading because he knew that Capone's wrathful vengeance would follow him to the ends of the earth.

It took two years of searching for records that would stand up in court. Frank Wilson, Nels Tessem and Bill Hodgins examined between them almost two million separate items. Strictly by accident, Wilson found three black ledgers in a file in the old Federal Building.

In one of these ledgers Wilson found a page whose columns were headed BIRD-CAGE, CRAPS, ROULETTE, HORSE BETS, 21. The dates were 1924-26. Wilson studied and analyzed each entry over the eighteen month period. The net profits were more than \$500,000. The payoffs listed were by initials and first names. The payoffs to Cicero officials were listed as "Town".

Wilson hastened to the state's attorney's office. There several assistant state's attorneys worked with Wilson. Their task included the comparison of handwriting. Specimens were obtained from the Motor Vehicle Bureau and other licensing agencies. At last a matching signature was found. It was that of Leslie Adelbert Shumway, who had been a bookkeeper before Fred Ries.

Ries and Shumway were brought to Chicago under heavy guard in order to protect them from Capone's executioners. Several of Capone's top hitmen tried to assassinate Shumway and Ries but failed. Trusted detectives from the state's attorney's office guarded them around the clock. Detectives slept in the same rooms with them. Their meals were always served in one or another of the rooms, and their food was prepared in the kitchen under

the watchful eyes of two stern-faced cops.

Capone now tried to bribe his way out of a conviction. The offer went as high as a million and a half dollars in cash. It was made to Elmer Irey through Joseph H. Callan, a former special assistant to the Commissioner of Internal Revenue. The emissary who called on Callan in New York was thrown out of Callan's office. He then was an executive of the Crucible Steel Company.

It took two years to bring Capone to trial before Judge James H. Wilkerson and a blue-ribbon jury in which he was charged with a whole assortment of counts. He was found guilty of some and not guilty of others. Guilty verdicts contradicted not-guilty ones, and vice versa. It was as bewildering to both defense and district attorneys as it was to the judge.

The judge considered the guilty verdicts on the counts returned by the jury. He asked Capone to rise and, when Al did so, Judge Wilkerson treated him to a scathing denunciation. He asked Capone if he had anything to say before he passed sentence. Capone shook his head.

Judge Wilkerson then said, "It is the judgment of the Court that you be confined in the

Leavenworth Penitentiary for a term of eleven years, and that you be fined a total of \$50,000 and assessed \$30,000 in court costs."

Judge Wilkerson denied bail and turned to U.S. Marshal Henry Laubenheimer. "When can you remove the defendant to Leavenworth, Marshal?"

"At six-fifteen tonight, Your Honor."

Judge Wilkerson nodded. "Good. Take him away."

The beginning of the humiliation and destruction of The King had begun. The Master Hoodlum, the man no one could touch, whose power and vast wealth had corrupted a great city and half the state, was stripped of it all. The image he had created of himself as a legendary bandit that rivaled all history's pirates was reduced to dust.

Capone was surrounded by deputy marshals when he walked from the courtroom. In the hall, a wiry little man half-danced before him, waved an official-looking document, and cried, "Internal Revenue. I have a demand for liens on the property of Alphonse and Mae Capone!"

The bureau had frozen all assets with what it terms a jeopardy assessment in order to prevent the Capones from selling or transferring such assets

before settling the tax claims.

Capone swore at the little man with every obscenity in the book, drew back his foot and aimed a kick at the process server's groin. He missed. The deputy marshals restrained him and led him into an office for fingerprinting. In the freight elevator he found himself next to the man he had known for two years as Mike Lepito. Lepito was in truth Special Agent Malone.

Capone allowed a wry grin to cross his features. "The only thing that fooled me," he said to Malone, "was your looks. You look like a wop. Well, you took your chances and I took mine."

Photographers followed Capone and the deputy marshals to a fourth floor cell. In the cell was a black man who was being held for violation of parole, and a skidrow bum who had been unable to pay a \$100 fine for disorderly conduct. Capone peeled off a C-note from a large roll and handed it to the dumbstruck bum, who was awed by the legendary presence of notorious gang leader.

Shortly after, Capone was led to the jail hospital for the routine shower and medical examination. Stripped naked, he stood there before the doctors and deputy marshals, glowering first at one and then



ATTORNEY LEAHY

the other, aware of his bulky figure, more than a little embarrassed. He believed he had been hit below the belt, that the case against him was

steeped in the deepest kind of raw prejudice.

He was lodged in jail to await transfer to Leavenworth Prison. Chicago was still Chicago and to many officials Capone was still the Big Guy, the man who had lined their pockets with money for years, made them loans he never wanted repaid. He was allowed to run the Organization from jail.

Warden David Moneyppenny transferred Capone to a cell on the fifth floor. There he had complete privacy and a stall shower. All his meals were sent in from the best restaurants. He was allowed to make phone calls and send telegrams. His every wish for conveniences and privileges was granted.

There is no doubt there were payoffs up and down the line. Political friends obtained passes to visit him but turned them over to members of the mob, Joe Fusco, Johnny Torrio, Murray Humphries, Red Barker, Jake Guzik and others. All this, however, was to end dramatically.

In December the Department of Justice received anonymous notes, letters and telegrams telling of Capone's favored life in jail. An investigation followed and U.S. Marshal Laubenheimer ordered Warden Moneyppenny to stop all visitors to Capone. He was moved to

the hospitals, where a detail of deputy marshals were assigned to guard duty around the clock.

Warden Moneyppenny's explanation for Capone's privileged life in jail was ludicrous. He said, "I didn't want Capone to mingle with the other prisoners. I was afraid he would be a bad influence on them."

On February 27, Capone was informed by the deputy warden that the District Court of Appeals had rejected his appeal. He took the news stoically.

SENSATIONAL

THEN CAME A most sensational series of events. Three days after Capone's appeal was turned down, Bruno Richard Hauptmann snatched the Lindbergh baby from his home in Hopewell, New Jersey. The nation was enraged at this most heinous of all crimes.

Capone sent word to Arthur Brisbane, noted newspaper columnist who was syndicated in all of the Hearst papers, that he just might be able to help in getting the baby back alive. Brisbane was given permission to visit Capone.

Capone told Brisbane that he didn't want any favors. "You arrange to get me out of here and I'll use all my connections to contact the people who pulled off this snatch. I'll put

up any kind of bond the government wants. I'll even arrange to have my brother take my place until I return. I wouldn't double-cross my wife and I wouldn't double-cross my brother. Same thing, so far as I'm concerned. That's my proposition."

Hearst headlines screamed across the country. Arthur Brisbane believed Capone and wrote that he endorsed the offer. "It is very possible," Brisbane wrote, "that Alphonse Capone could do exactly what he says. His power in whatever he undertakes is known to many. This writer believes that whether he succeeds or fails, he would return."

The story caused an uproar and demands that Capone be freed so that he could effect the Lindbergh baby's release. Republican Senator Hiram Bingham of Connecticut declared that it was his firm belief the Capone gang had planned the kidnapping for the purpose of freeing Capone. That, of course, was ridiculous.

The federal courts wouldn't even discuss Capone's offer, and Charles Lindbergh, one of America's great heroes, declared, "I wouldn't ask for Capone's release even if it would save a life."

On May 4, Capone was taken from the jail under heavy

guard. Instead of removing him to Leavenworth, authorities decided to take him to the Atlanta Penitentiary.

It was ten o'clock at night when the U.S. Marshal's car, along with fifteen police cars, pulled out of the jailyard. Flares blazed to provide additional light and visibility in case of trouble.

Capone sat in the back seat between a Secret Service agent and an auto thief named Vito Morici, Morici, to whom he was handed to whom he was handcuffed. U.S. Marshal Laubenheimer and a deputy marshal sat facing them on jump seats. At the Dearborn Station, a crowd had gathered. Dan Serritella, who was on trial for embezzlement, and Matt and Mimi Capone walked with the prisoners as far as the train gate. The ride to oblivion had begun.

The strange appeal Capone had for the man in the street was contained in an improbable vibrancy. The hundreds of men and women who lined the stations where the train passed or stopped wanted a glimpse of the man whose reputation as a master hoodlum, gangster, mob leader and head of an organization that controlled one of the largest metropolitan cities in the United States by corrup-

tion. It was more than mere

curiosity. It seemed to border on adulation, hero worship. They cheered and yelled his name. It was an incredible spectacle. However, it could be understood. It was the time of the Great Depression and people were hungry. The banks had folded. The savings of the poor had been lost.

Capone had fed the hungry in his many soup kitchens in Chicago. His reputation for generosity to the needy who came to the Lexington Hotel, where he maintained his headquarters, had been written up many times in newspapers even while it was said that he did it as a matter of expedience and self-aggrandizement.

Capone answered the crowd's cheering by waving a hand from his seat. The cheers grew louder. Capone was pleased and smiled broadly with the bravado of a man on his way to the guillotine.

The train rolled into Atlanta's Union Station a little before eight o'clock in the evening. From there, under heavy guard, Marshal Laubenhimer and Capone were driven the four miles to the prison.

The prison grapevine is one of the mysteries of communication. The three thousand inmates, crowded into cells constructed to hold a little more than half that many, knew at

once that the car entering the big gate held Capone. The cons rattled the bars, banging on them with shoes, broomsticks, tin cups, anything else that would make a noise. They cheered and yelled. A few, the nobodies, the malcontents, jeered and taunted.

Warden Arthur C. Aderhold met the prisoner and Marshal Laubenhimer. The Marshal handed the Warden a paper which he signed and handed back. It read—

Received from H. C. W. Laubenhimer, United States Marshal for the Northern District of Illinois, the body of the within named prisoner. . .

Capone was put through the prison routine, fingerprinted, photographed, his hair cut close to his head. He was then taken to the hospital ward for medical examinations, for tests to determine if he carried any communicable disease.

A Wasserman test Capone took under protest proved negative. He refused to submit to a spinal puncture. Dr. William Ossenfort could not legally compel him to take it. He should have. It could well have saved his life or added years to it. He admitted he had once had syphilis but was cured.

The prison, like most prisons

throughout the country, then and now, was overcrowded. There were no single cells, only two-man and eight-man cells. Capone was sent to an eight-man cell. Its tenants included a former judge convicted of using the mails to defraud, an Ohio criminal with a long record of various offenses, a wildcat oil promoter and four mail robbers, each serving twenty-five years.

One of the mail robbers was Red Rudensky. Capone knew him from the early bootleg days. Rudensky had admired Capone from the first. When Rudensky came in from the recreation yard shortly after Capone was lodged in the cell and the two saw each other, they shook hands warmly.

Rudensky was a character, spoke with a heavy Jewish accent, had a terrific sense of humor and could have made it big in vaudeville or on the night-club circuit. He chose to be a mail robber and was one of the best. But he went to the well once too often.

Rudensky had a lot of clout in the prison with both inmates and officials. He staged many shows in the prison during the holidays. Because he was one of that breed of top professional thieves, and, in the parlance of the underworld, *solid*, he was respected by the cons. He told Capone not to worry about a



JACK McGURN

thing. He would take care of things.

Capone was restless from the very first and couldn't sleep. He suffered from nightmares in the ensuing weeks and raved in his sleep. Rudensky would shake him awake and the two would sit on Rudensky's bunk and talk for the rest of the night. At one of the shows that Rudensky staged he introduced Capone, who was given a standing ovation.

A few of the petty thieves, wanting a reputation, went after Capone. Two hillbillies, in

on morals charges, attacked him. They did little damage. However, Rudensky decided to establish once and for all that giving Capone trouble meant reprisals. The next day "The Revenge Squad" caught up with the two hillbillies. They were beaten and bloodied. One wound up with a broken cheekbone and a fractured skull, the other was never again able to use his right arm.

Most or all prisons, from the dozens upon dozens of men I have talked with who did time, have weak spots within their physical and personnel structures and makeup. Trustees who drive trucks but live within the prison walls are able to make contact with relatives and friends, not only for themselves but for those they can count on.

Red Rudensky made a deal with one of the con truck drivers to pick up cash at a drop for Capone. Thousands of dollars were brought in and Capone used the money to win favors from other cons and special privileges from corrupt guards. Rudensky kept the money for Capone and made the payoffs for him to cons and guards alike.

Capone had it easy, or as easy as it is possible to have it in prison. Steaks were smuggled to him from the kitchen.

On occasion, a bottle of whisky was brought in by a guard, who had received as much as fifty or a hundred dollars for the contraband liquor.

Several months after he had been confined, his family hired one of the most able lawyers in the country to appeal the case. He was William C. Leahy of Washington, D.C. Leahy's argument was based on the statute of limitations. For some unknown reason, Attorneys Nash and Ahearn, who handled the defense in Chicago, did not bring up this important aspect of the case. The government, the federal district attorneys and the judge were sure that it would be brought up and compel them to dismiss all charges.

That oversight or neglect, deliberate or accidental, on the part of Nash and Ahearn, lost the two lawyers every hood and gangster in Chicago. They never again were asked to represent any member of any of the mobs.

RETRIAL

IN APRIL OF THAT YEAR, the Supreme Court, which ruled on a tax case involving a Boston businessman, declared that an attempt to evade a tax did not constitute fraud. The three-year limitation, not six, should apply as it did in civil cases.

Leahy argued that Capone's case was parallel. He, therefore, was illegally imprisoned.

Leahy petitioned the federal court in Atlanta and, on September 21, a writ of habeas corpus was presented by Leahy. Capone was taken from the Atlanta Penitentiary for his court appearance. Judge E. Marsin Underwood took Leahy's petition under advisement.

In January, Capone stood once again before Judge Underwood.

The Court quoted a section of the federal statute of limitations whereby the time the offender is absent from the district in which he committed the offense shall not be taken as any part of the time limited by law for the commencement of proceedings.

Judge Underwood declared that, from 1925 to 1931, defendant Capone was either in jail in Philadelphia or in his home in Miami. The records before the Court indicate defendant Capone thus had absented himself for several years.

"If trial counsel's motion had put in issue the question of fact as to whether or not petitioner had been within the district a sufficient length of time for the statute to establish a bar, then a denial by prosecution might have been necessary. This was not done. The Court, according

to the allegations of the petitioner, overruled the motion on the ground that the six-year limitation was applicable."

Judge Underwood held further that the ruling should have been challenged at the trial or on appeal. The issue had no place in the habeas corpus hearing. The fact that the Supreme Court declared later that the three-year limitation was applicable months after the trial did not affect the hearing either.

Finally, Judge Underwood ruled, "On habeas corpus, only the jurisdiction of the court whose judgment is challenged can be called in question. Any other rule would make a Federal Court, of a district where a penitentiary was located, a Court of Appeals to retry all cases of prisoners who might apply for writs of habeas corpus."

The petition was dismissed and Leahy returned to Washington.

The shift of operations that would mean the beginning of the end for Capone and destroy him emotionally; spiritually and mentally came with a memorandum from U.S. Attorney General Homer S. Cummings to Special Assistant Joseph B. Kennan, and was dated August 1, 1933.

"Would it not be well to

think of having a special prison for racketeers, kidnapers and others guilty of predatory crimes, said prison to be in all respects a proper place of confinement. It would be in a remote place, on an island or in Alaska, so that the persons incarcerated would not be in constant communication with friends outside. . ."

On August 8, 1933, the following memorandum from Sanford Bates, Director of the Bureau of Prisons, was sent to U.S. Attorney General Cummings:

"At your request, please find herewithin estimate of the probable maintenance charges at the prison at Alcatraz Island if operated by the Department of Justice on the basis of 200 prisoners. I am of the opinion that the removal of perhaps one hundred of the most desperate men in Atlanta and Leavenworth would be a distinct benefit to those places and would aid in the prevention of threatened demonstrations. . ."

On October 12, 1933, U.S. Attorney General Cummings made a radio address on "The Recurring Problem of Crime."

"For some time I have desired to obtain a place of confinement to which could sent our most dangerous intractable criminals. You can appreciate, therefore, with what pleasure I

make public the fact that such a place has been found. By negotiation with the War Department, we have obtained the use of Alcatraz Prison, located on a precipitous island in San Francisco Bay, more than a mile from shore.

"The current is swift and escapes are practically impossible. It has secure cells for 600 persons. It is in excellent condition and admirably fitted for the purpose I had in mind. Here may be isolated the criminals of the vicious and irredeemable type so that their evil influence may not extend to other prisoners who are disposed to rehabilitate themselves."

Alcatraz Prison, aside from its location in the bay, the very loneliness of its atmosphere, the destructive forces of cruelty, harshness, the barbarity contained in the planned removal of the prisoners from all contact and communication with family and the rights of counsel, became a hell-hole worse than Devil's Island when James A. Johnston was named as warden.

Johnston was a former banker whose manner of gentleness hid a sadistic and cold-blooded character. He devised malevolent tortures designed to break the spirit of the toughest lawbreaker. Newspapers and

radios were banned. All mail, incoming and outgoing, was strictly censored. Since January, when he took office, he set about transforming Alcatraz into a place of torment, a Stygian creek.

Originally named by the 18th-Century Spanish explorers *Isla de los Alcatraces*, Island of Pelicans, after the birds that roosted there, the island was comprised of twelve acres. It rose steeply to almost 140 feet above the bay. Johnston constructed guard towers at six points commanding views of every foot of the island.

Thirty-caliber carbines and high-powered rifles were placed in each of the towers. A 12-foot-high cyclone fence, topped by barbed wire, enclosed the work sections. Barbed wire was everywhere. All the old sewers, utility tunnels, all openings leading to the bay, were blocked by cement and reinforced.

Triple steel doors and electronic detectors were installed. The cells measured eight by four feet and were furnished with a fold-up bunk hooked to the wall, a fold-up table and chair, shelf, washbasin, toilet, and a shaded ceiling light.

The "Hole," designed by Johnston, was a smaller cell. Its only furnishing was a mattress which was removed every



"WHITEY" PHILLIPS

morning by a guard. There was no light, so that for most the day and the entire night the occupant was in total darkness. Cellblock D was designated as *The Hole*. Every inmate, sooner or later, wound up doing time in one of the cells, some for periods of weeks or months.

The prison grapevine in Atlanta was that Capone would be one of the first to be transferred to Alcatraz.

Capone told Rudensky he had it fixed. He would not be transferred.

One sweltering night, about eight o'clock, a burly guard in the Atlanta Penitentiary came to Capone's cell, banged on the bars.

"Okay, Al, let's go. Leave all your belongings behind. You're going for a long ride."

Capone stared hard at the guard, "Yeah, like where?"

"You'll know soon enough. Let's go."

Capone began to gather the framed pictures of his family, wife, son, mother, sister. He was ordered to leave them.

"Like *hell!*" he stormed.

The guard called for reinforcements. It took four more guards to drag him out of his cell. He raved and swore and threatened to have every one of the guards and their families murdered in their beds. He was handcuffed and led from the cellblock, cursing and fighting the guards. Rudensky never saw him again.

Rudensky himself, after thirty-five years of prison, attained complete rehabilitation. He was sick of confinement and regimentation. As editor of the prison paper, *The Atlantian*, he drew the attention of Margaret Mitchell, author of *Gone with the Wind*, Ralph McGill, editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*, and of Eleanor Roosevelt. He was engaged by Charles Allen Ward, president of the St. Paul advertising agency, *Brown and Bigelow*, himself an ex-convict. There were 200 other ex-cons working in Ward's office. Rudensky became chief copy

editor. In recent years he became a consultant to lock manufacturing companies, banks and police departments. A safecracker all his days as a criminal, he was an expert on locks.

I got to know him well through correspondence. He was an able and intelligent writer.

The prisoners to be taken to Alcatraz, fifty-three of them, were loaded onto a train that pulled into the Atlanta Penitentiary through a sally port. There were six cars. Two of the cars were specially built to house the prisoners.

Steel bars and steel mesh screens covered the windows. Boiler plate reinforced the flooring. Two guards were posted in each of the cars by Captain of the Guards Comer Head. At each end of the cars, two other guards armed with shotguns were on duty around the clock, working in shifts.

Every precautionary measure in the interest of security was taken. The train was routed on a circuitous course known only to a few railroad officials and federal authorities. It made stops only to take on water and food or to change crews. Reporters were told that Capone was "not being transferred."

During the four-day ride the prisoners ate and rested in

their seats. Few of them slept. Legirons and handcuffs were never removed. The prisoners' cars were backed onto a barge with rails and detached from the rest of the train. A Coast Guard cutter's crew, heavily armed, moved behind a tugboat past rows of anchored yachts out into the choppy bay.

ALCATRAZ AT LAST

THE BARGE BUMPED against the Alcatraz dock. Legirons and handcuffs were removed and the prisoners walked haltingly, two by two, stiffened from the ride, stinking with the sweat and dirt of their long journey.

Each prisoner was assigned a number. Capone's was 85. They were led in a group to the bathhouse, stripped naked and medically examined. Their ears, nostrils, mouth and rectum were given a thorough probing for hidden contraband.

They were then issued prison clothing stamped with their numbers, front and back, and taken to the cells in which they would spend at least fifteen hours each day. In the following weeks, a hundred more prisoners were received at Alcatraz from Leavenworth and Lewisburg, Pennsylvania.

Capone tried to win favor from the other cons by offering to send money to their rela-

tives, who would then send it to them, but Warden Johnston put a plug in that endeavor. Gradually Capone lost face with many of the cons, most of them lesser thieves, who were caught in the government net. Many of these insulted him, and a few threatened him.

There was no Rudensky to take up for him and, for the first time in his long career as a gangster and killer, he knew fear. Face to face with any of these, he could take care of himself. What he feared was a knife in the back or a club or iron bar over the head when his back was turned.

Alcatraz, in the plan framed by Cummings and Bates and ably carried out by Johnston, was a place purely for isolation, custodial and punitive measures. Rehabilitation was a foreign word. The only benefit offered the prisoners was a reduction of ten days for every forty served for good behavior, and work credits depending on their assignments.

Attorney General Cummings harbored the thought that a place like Alcatraz, once word got around of its stiff policies of strict regimentation, its lack of privileges and deadly and monotonous routine, it would deter the hoods from committing federal offenses.

It was a pipe dream. Pro-

paganda issuing from his office about the sternness of Alcatraz no more deterred bank robbers and mail robbers or other miscreants from committing federal offenses than did the threat of capital punishment. Very few big-time gangsters ever saw Alcatraz, let alone knew confinement there.

No court could sentence an offender directly to Alcatraz. Only those already serving time in other federal prisons could be transferred there, then only if the warden of a particular penitentiary recommended it—and then only if the director of the Bureau of Prisons approved the transfer.

It took James V. Bennett, who replaced Sanford Bates, to close Alcatraz in 1963, because, he said, "It was too costly to operate and *too typical of the retributive justice that has no place in our philosophy.*"

The tortuous routine of Alcatraz was enough to break the spirit of any man. Bells, bells, bells rang throughout the day. Prisoners were not permitted watches, so a bell announced the time at half-hour intervals. The day began with a bell at 6:30 A.M. when the lights went on. Inmates were allowed twenty minutes to dress and make their beds.

If an inmate wanted to shave he placed a matchbox through

the bars of his cell into which a guard would place a razor blade. Three minutes later the guard returned to claim the blade. At 6:50 a bell clanged again and a guard took the morning count. A third bell was a signal that all inmates were accounted for.

A fourth bell was for breakfast. Turnkeys inside locked cages pulled back levers and the heavy steel cell door bolts shot back with a noise like a dozen cannon going off at the same time. Cons have a name for the opening and closing of cell doors or the doors themselves. They call it "The Slammer" and rightly so.

I knew a man named Jack Ross who served a long sentence in Alcatraz, from whom I got a great deal of this information. He told me the bells and sounds of the cell doors opening and closing were enough to drive a man nuts.

The cons ate ten to a table. Blacks and whites were segregated. All sat facing in the same direction. In a steel-barred gallery above the dining room, armed guards observed the goings-on. The silence system was rigidly invoked. Talking was forbidden in the mess hall, cell-blocks and the bathhouse. During recess in the recreation yard talking was permitted for three minutes. On

weekends, in the afternoons, for two hours.

Certain inmates, the hoods, gangsters, bank robbers and mail robbers, had their own cliques. The lesser thieves gathered together in their respective groups. Jack Ross told me that one clique permitted no interference from another, and a sort of high and low convict society was established by unwritten law.

Among the more notorious gangsters lodged in Alcatraz were Arthur "Doc" Barker and Alvin "Creepy" Karpis of the Ma Barker gang—George "Machine Gun" Kelly, Albert Bates and Harvey Bailey, who had collected a ransom of \$200,000 for the Oklahoma oil magnate Charles Urschel—Roy Gardner, train bandit and escape artist—and a select few others.

The food wasn't bad. Warden Johnston was aware of the fact that most prison riots resulted because of food. He insisted on three palatable meals a day. They were served cafeteria style, and the prisoners were permitted to take all they wanted of certain foods but had to eat it all. If they didn't, they got no meals the next day.

Breakfast usually consisted of oatmeal with milk, fried bologna sausage, cottage fried potatoes, toast or bread with

margarine and coffee. Capone always cleaned his plate.

Warden Johnston tried to avoid trouble in the prison in every way because he knew that a riot would undermine his entire program and bring on investigations that could cost him his job. Since there was no commissary in the prison where the cons could purchase cigarets, candy and other permitted items sold in all state prisons and federal institutions, Johnston issued three packs of cigarets a week to each inmate. For heavy smokers, a tobacco and cigaret paper dispenser was installed in every cell block so they could roll their own.

Capone was assigned to work in the laundry to which the army posts around the bay sent their laundry. Many servicemen boasted to friends and relatives that their private laundryman was none other than Al Capone.

The monotonous routine during the week was varied on Saturday and Sunday. Religious services were held on Sunday morning, plus a weekly bath and two hours for leisure. The cons could spend their free hours exercising in the yard or following a hobby indoors. Capone learned to read music and improvise on his banjo. He usually chose to play his banjo with a five-man combo he or-

ganized. He sang, too, and composed a song entitled *Mother*.

Jack Ross told me Capone was a very sentimental man and talked often of his mother, his wife and his sister Mafalda. When he spoke of his son, Alphonse, Jr., tears would come to his eyes.

Before the lights went out at 9:30 p.m. prisoners could read books or magazines, strictly censored, borrowed from the library. Capone seldom read either. He would pace his cell or lie on his bunk, eyes closed and in a reflective mood. Was it all worth it? Was what he had gained worth what he had lost? He mentioned this several times to Ross.

Mail privileges were severely restricted. Prisoners could write one letter a week to a relative and receive no more than three each week from relatives on an approved mailing list. They could correspond with no one else except an attorney, and even those letters were scrutinized, a flagrant violation of confidentiality between attorney and client.

Johnston got away with a great deal, especially in civil rights matters. The riots in recent years all over the country, Jackson, Michigan, Attica, New York, Rahway, New Jersey, San Quentin, California, and others came on the heels of

such violations or prisoners' rights.

Censors read all mail and deleted any portion that did not deal entirely with family affairs, forwarding a typed copy of what remained. Capone's letters were so drastically expurgated that he couldn't make sense of them.

The continuous routine and its stringent monotony had its caustic effect on many of the prisoners. Many went insane. In 1937, fourteen of them became violently insane, while others went stir crazy. Warden Johnston did not recognize mental illness. So long as the inmate was able to function physically, without causing trouble or disrupting the general routine, his condition was ignored.

A consultant psychiatrist visited Alcatraz at irregular intervals, often months apart. He was no help. Warden Johnston ordered him to "leave the nuts alone so long as they don't bother anybody."

One prisoner, Rube Persfal, No. 284, who was assigned to the dock detail, seized an ax, laid his left hand on a wooden plank and, laughing insanely, chopped off every finger. Still laughing as he regarded the bleeding stumps of his fingers, that were pouring out his life's blood, he implored a guard to

chop off the fingers of his right hand. He was committed to the hospital but not declared officially insane.

ESCAPE IMPOSSIBLE?

FIVE MEN TRIED to escape during the time Capone was imprisoned. One was killed before he could get off the island. One was wounded, one recaptured unhurt. Two others sawed through the bars of a workshop window, broke open a fence gate with a Stillson wrench and dived into the water.

They were never found, dead or alive, for it was assumed they could not have swum far against the riptide, with the dense fog then swathing the bay. That assumption was wrong.

I wrote the story of the two escapees, John Doe and Richard Roe that was published in *Signature Magazine* some years ago. There was incontrovertible proof that the two did make it to the mainland. At every opportunity they bathed in cold water, did exercises in the yard and in their cells.

When the opportune time came they sawed their way out, broke through the fence, found a makeshift raft that was hidden for them in one of the caves and paddled their way to the mainland. They were seen by a

truck driver, who picked them up, and by several other witnesses.

Johnston did not escape riots. They occurred at the rate of about one a year but none lasted more than three days, after which a score or more inmates were thrown into the hole on bread and water. Their one meal each week consisted of a paper cup filled with a mixture of peas and mashed potatoes.

During one rebellion, which occurred in January, 1935, Capone became involved with another con. The laundry room was always hot and humid, damp and badly ventilated. An army transport, loaded with laundry, anchored at the dock. The amount of wash had accumulated for weeks and the task became backbreaking.

Capone was working on the mangle, oblivious to what was brewing. About forty inmates walked out in protest. Johnston employed one guard to every three cons. The strikers were rounded up and thrown into the hole. Capone took no part in the walkout. About a month later, one of the rebellious cons named Bill Collier was catching laundry as Capone fed it into the mangle. Capone protested to Collier that the laundry came too fast and too wet.

Collier picked up a sopping

bundle and threw it into Capone's face. Capone reacted immediately. He was still a very powerful man, still the same hothead, still the same man possessed of a murderous anger. Before any of the guards could stop the brawl, Capone blacked both of Collier's eyes and broke his nose. Both men were thrown into the hole, where they spent ten days.

There was another strike in January the following year. Once again Capone was not involved in it. It arose out of resentment against Warden Johnston, who refused medical treatment to an inmate suffering from a stomach ulcer.

Johnston believed the con was faking. He wasn't. He died as a result of Johnston's utterly cold-blooded stupidity in refusing to allow the inmate hospital treatment. Capone refused to join the rebellious group. He was called a rat and a scab.

Capone knew the odds against the cons. He knew they couldn't win. He requested permission to remain in his cell until the strike was over. He wasn't alone in this. Doc Barker, Harvey Bailey, George Machine-Gun Kelly and Roy Gardner joined him.

The first day back at work, after the mutineers had been starved into submission, someone threw a sashweight at

Capone's head. Roy Gardner, who was standing beside Capone, saw the weight coming and shoved Capone violently out of the path of missile. The object struck Capone's right arm and inflicted a deep cut. Capone was transferred from the laundry to the bathhouse cleaning squad.

About five months after the strike, Capone was cleaning up the bathhouse when Jim Lucas, a Texas bank robber who had come to the barber shop adjoining the bathhouse, grabbed a pair of scissors and drove the blades into Capone's back. Capone was taken to the hospital, Lucas to the hole.

There were other attempts to kill Capone, "the Wop With The Mop," as his enemies now called him. Harvey Bailey and Doc Barker exposed a plot to doctor Capone's coffee with lye. On another occasion, as Capone was on his way to the dentist's office, he was leaped on from behind and almost choked to death before he broke his attacker's hold and floored him with a series of blows and kicks.

Dr. George Hess, who had worked under Dr. William Oslenfort at Atlanta, knew of Capone's aversion to a spinal puncture. He broached the subject again to Capone because he believed that his patient was

showing symptoms of an advanced case of syphilis, possibly paresis. Once again, Capone refused.

Johnston's tyrannical treatment of the prisoners finally blew up in his face and almost cost him his life. He observed the very dangerous habit, because he believed it to be of psychological value, of waiting at the exit from the mess hall, alone and unarmed, his back to the cons until the last man had left the hall.

This time, Barton "Whitey" Phillips, a young bank robber serving a life sentence, swung on Johnston with a vicious right to the jaw, knocking the warden down. Before the guards could reach the scene, Phillips stamped on Johnston's head and chest, the kicks to the head knocking out several of Johnston's teeth.

Phillips was dragged to the hole, where he was beaten unmercifully. The beatings continued regularly for weeks and, when Phillips was finally released from the hole, he came out a mindless zombie.

On February 5, 1938, the weather was unseasonably warm. The prison rule for wearing peajackets, issued to each inmate, was indicated by three blasts of a whistle. That morning, no whistle blew. Alvin Karpis, who had the cell next

to Capone's, came out of his cell when the bell rang for breakfast and saw Capone putting on his peajacket.

Karpis, staring at Capone, said, "Al, no peajackets today."

Capone acted as if he didn't hear him and continued to put on full winter gear, with cap and cottonwork gloves. Karpis repeated his statement. Capone only stared at him.

Karpis moved on. Capone failed to get into line. The guards seemed to sense that something was wrong. They watched Capone closely but did not disturb him. He finally came out of his cell and entered the mess hall, the last one to do so. Several guards noticed a thread of spittle glistening on Capone's chin.

Capone moved mechanically toward the steam table seemingly lost in another world. Deputy Warden Ernest Miller spoke to Capone quietly and patted his arm. Capone then did a strange thing. He pointed out the window, a meaningless gesture, and started to retch.

Deputy Warden Miller led Capone to a locked gate across the hall and ordered the guard on the other side to open the gate. They assisted Capone up a flight of stairs to the hospital.

Dr. Hess and Dr. Edward Twitchell, a consulting psychiatrist that Dr. Hess called in,

diagnosed Capone's symptoms as suggestive of damage to the central nervous system characteristic of advanced syphilis. In moments of lucidity, Capone understood what the doctors told him. He finally agreed to a spinal puncture.

The fluid was sent to the Marine Hospital in San Francisco for analysis. The report from the Marine Hospital confirmed the doctors' report. Capone was suffering from paresis, a condition of syphilis that attacks the brain.

The reports reached the newspapers and stories came out on the front pages from coast to coast declaring that Capone had been driven insane as a result of his confinement in Alcatraz. There were complementing stories of other prisoners who had gone insane, those who had committed suicide and those who had been beaten to the point of insanity.

Mae Capone pleaded with Warden Johnston by telephone to free her husband. That, however, was not in his power. But he did order Capone confined to the hospital.

He spent the remaining year of his ten-year sentence, reduced now to six years and five months for good behavior and work credits, on the island. In the hospital, Capone was treated with injections of

arsphenamine, shock treatment and induced fever. The progress of the disease was retarded but not arrested.

Capone's last day on Alcatraz came on January 6, 1939. Because of his deterioration, the decision was taken to allow him to serve the sentence in the newly opened Federal Correctional Institution at Terminal Island.

The following November, with all penalties paid, Capone was released from the U.S. Penitentiary at Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. Mae and Ralph Capone called for him and drove him to Baltimore's Union Memorial Hospital. He lived with Mae in Baltimore as an outpatient of the hospital under the care of Dr. Joseph Moore, a Johns Hopkins syphilologist.

In Chicago, reporters asked Jake Guzik if Capone would be taking over the mob again now that he was free.

"Al," Guzik replied, "is as nutty as a fruitcake."

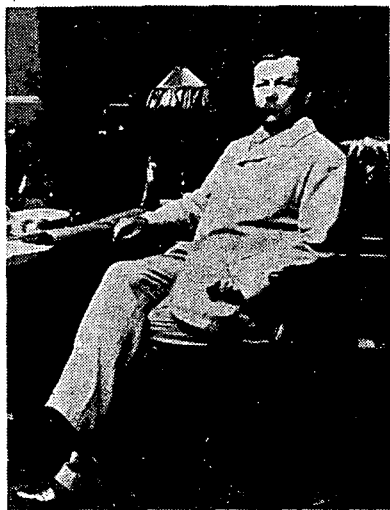
Capone lived out his days on his Palm Island estate, sitting on the dock with a fishing pole, attired in a faded bathrobe, never catching a fish. Visitors came. At times he recognized them, at other times he didn't. know them from Adam's off-ox. He died on January 25, 1947 at the age of 48, and was buried in Plot 48 in Chicago's Mount Olivet Cemetery.

BOOK REVIEW

*Shayne salutes a brilliant
memoir of Sir A. Conan Doyle*

BIOGRAPHIES ON THE creator of Sherlock Holmes and his stout assistant and narrator, Dr. John Watson, continue to proliferate on the bookstalls in seemingly unabatable numbers. Some are spoofs, some are deadpan fables put out by devotees of the immortal sleuth, some are concordances dedicated to the minute clue and the Freudian slip—most of them are dull as the proverbial ditchwater to the non-dedicated reader.

Occasionally, however, a new Holmes-Watson-Conan Doyle opus appears that is, or should be, of consuming interest not only to Baker Street Irregulars but to the general reader public as well. Of these, fine crime fiction writer John Dickson Carr's two decades gone biography of Doyle—is probably the most authoritative and best conceived—or was until the appearance late last year of *THE ADVENTURES OF CONAN DOYLE* by Charles Higham (published by W.W. Norton).



Approach and organization are intriguing. Doyle's psychological problems are given insightful treatment, with each phase of the author's life treated as a separated but interlocking "adventure"—much like a case involving his famous sleuth. Doyle's reluctance to carry on with his super-sleuth at the peak of early success, his preoccupation with medicine, with history and with science fiction, his loves and marriages, his very real adventures on land and sea and, above all, his latter-day obsession with spiritualism—all of these are treated fairly and skillfully interwoven to impart to the reader a portrait in depth of a fascinating man.

—THE EDITOR.

"WE UNDERSTAND YOU have a certain specialty," the big man said, speaking the words with a deceptive softness.

"That's right," I replied and lit another cigaret.

I'd spent most of my life up to now living off one specialty or another. When I was a boy back in the Midwest, there had been a fire house on our block, and I had earned my movie money walking the great spotted dalmatian each morning.

There are certain twists life takes, certain crazy things that change you from one specialty to another. All through college I'd planned to build things, great soaring things like bridges to span the oceans or buildings to reach the clouds. But something had happened.

A great many things had happened, actually. Even though we had a fire house in our block, it hadn't saved my mother and father one stormy

A TOUCH OF RED

I was being paid to destroy a TV transmitter. I had no idea that it would destroy the country, as well.

by EDWARD D. HOCH

Dogs were my specialty in those days. At college, while studying mechanical engineering, the specialty had changed to girls. I was quite the boy then, and in some circles I still was.

"We understand you can cause a television transmitting tower to collapse without the use of explosives."

"That's right," I said. He was the biggest man I had ever seen, close up.

January night when our home caught fire. I had come back from college to walk among charred reminders of my youth, and then to stand silently in the snow while my parents were buried. I never went home again—there was nothing to go home to.

"You're familiar with the television tower for WWOW-TV?" the big man asked. "Can you do it? Tomorrow night?"

"I can do it." In truth, my



technique would not work on just any television tower. The larger ones were generally constructed with wide bases, without necessity for supporting cables. But a town like Littlefork was lucky to have a television station at all.

The big man, whose name was Waintop, slid a packet of bills across the table. I knew without counting them that there'd be a thousand dollars there. We had agreed on the sum at the beginning. "You get the other four thousand when the job is done."

"All right," I said. "What time?"

"We'll let you know. Tomorrow morning."

So now, instead of building things, I destroyed them. It was not such a bad occupation. It was better than doing nothing, better than stagnating in a world that didn't care. I had begun with small things—automobiles, mostly, on insurance-fraud schemes.

From there I had gone on to the tower of a New Jersey radio station, then into television tower work. There wasn't much call for it, but I was the best in the business. I never used fire or explosives, maybe because of what had happened back home. You didn't need them to destroy most of the stuff being built these days.

I left Waintop at his hotel and walked through the October afternoon toward my car. Leaves were falling in the breeze, striking my face in a fury of golden color. I could look out across the valley and see the turning of autumn, the yellows and golds and browns, with here and there a touch of red. It was that kind of a day.

Junie and I were staying at a new motel on the edge of town, overlooking the highway that cut through the valley like an arrow. She had stayed in the room, because I had the car, and watched an old western movie on television.

"How'd it go, Sam?"

"It went." I tossed the packet of money on the bed. "A thousand to start with."

"Is this the station?" She asked, gesturing toward a dying Indian on the screen. "WWOW? They show lousy movies."

"What do you expect up here? We're practically in Canada."

"Who is this guy with the money, anyway?"

I slipped off my shoes and relaxed on the bed, thinking how good a beer would taste. "Cain Waintop. He must weigh three hundred pounds. Maybe more. He publishes a paper called the *Conservative Worker*. Anti-Communist, I guess, though

he's done some pretty strange things."

"His money's as good as anyone else's," Junie said. She understood the way it was. I wouldn't have had her around if she didn't.

"We'll have to stay till tomorrow night," I told her. "He wants the thing to go at a certain time."

Sometimes I thought about what I was doing, but not too often, and never with regret. This was the age of the destructor, the age when a building came down for every one that went up. I could have made a living junking old cars or bulldozing tenements. Instead, I was a bit more direct about it, and the money was better.

"Tomorrow night," Junie repeated. "Do you know why?"

"I don't care why. Maybe he doesn't like their old movies."

"It's in the afternoon papers." She passed me a copy across the bed.

The President will interrupt his current campaign swing through the midwest for a major television address on the worsening foreign situation tomorrow night. The address will be made from the civic auditorium of Littlefork, and fed to all three television networks through the facilities of WWOW-TV.

I read it aloud and tossed the paper back on the bed. "I wasn't going to vote for him anyway," I told her.

"This could get us into big trouble, Sam."

"Hell, it's always been a federal offense. This time's no different." But I guess I knew it would be different. Littlefork was out in the middle of nowhere, without the usual leased wires to carry the President's speech to the networks. The transmitting tower of WWOW would have to be used, and with a single hacksaw blade I could put him off the air.

There was one big advantage in not using explosives. When the tower went, things were in such a state of confusion that it was usually hours before the certain fact of sabotage could be established. There was no passing motorist to tell of a great flaming blast, no evidence of blasting caps and fuse. Generally I was in the next state before they even started looking for me.

"Be careful, Sam," she said.

I pulled her down on the bed beside me. "I'm always careful. Call down and get us a couple of beers, huh?"

CAIN WAINTOP WAS waiting for me the next morning in a parked car overlooking the

wide sweep of the valley. "Beautiful country here," he said as I slid into the back seat next to him. "Beautiful colors."

"The President's speaking tonight. I didn't know about that."

"Does it make a difference to you?"

"Maybe it's worth more than five thousand."

The big man smiled. His eyes under colorless brows closed as he said, "There might be a bonus in it for you, depending on how things go."

"Why do you want him off the air? Are you a Communist or something?"

The smile turned to a chuckle. "Have you ever read my newspaper?"

"No."

"Perhaps I'm just for the other party."

"What will happen when that tower falls tonight? Will it be some sort of signal?"

"That need not concern you. Do your job, and you will be well rewarded." As an afterthought, he added, "We do not intend to harm the President or anyone else, if that's what concerns you. This is only to be a demonstration. There are still some of us who believe in a different approach to the world we live in. We want to make our voice heard, to show everyone that we have the

power to back up our words."

"Just what are your politics?" I asked him.

"Does it matter, really? We are the opposition, and we are always with you." His great ham of a hand patted my knee. "Just do the job. You will be rewarded."

I sighed. "All right. What time?"

"He starts speaking at nine o'clock. I think about five minutes later the tower should fall. One other thing—how long will WWOW be off the air?"

"Usually it's close to twenty-four hours before they can rig up an emergency system."

"Fine. Then the President will have to go elsewhere if he wishes to continue his speech."

There was a sort of haze in the valley this day, an autumn blending of burning leaves and windborne smog from the industrial complexes to the west. As I left the car and walked over to my own vehicle, we might have been the only people within a hundred miles. I thought about a country with only me and Cain Waintop left alive and wondered which would be the master, which the slave.

In the afternoon, I took Junie to a movie in town. We sat holding hands in the nearly deserted theater watching a British picture about war in

Burma. It seemed very far away, and it depressed me. Afterward, we stopped someplace for a couple of drinks, but I was careful to stop at two. It was going to be a busy night.

Junie went back to the motel to pack, and I drove out to the hill where WWOW's tower was located. It was already growing dark, with the depressing early gloom of October that tells you too soon of winter's coming. But the tower was as I remembered it, and there was no car at the transmitter building. There would be no problem.

The tower itself weighed nearly twenty tons, and shot upward some three hundred feet from the very center of the transmitter building. It was anchored to the ground by three double sets of cables arranged triangularly around it.

Each of the three anchor points for the cables was located over three hundred feet from the transmitter building, with the cable ends attached to an enormous concrete "dead-man" buried in the ground. For further protection, the anchor points were surrounded by a high chain-link fence.

I had seen this type of tower too many times before and knew it would be an easy job to bring it down. At a little after eight, I parked the car some distance away and started to-

ward the nearest of the fenced-in anchor points on foot. For tools I carried only a few hacksaw blades.

The fence was easy. I cut through it around the padlock and had the gate open in five minutes. Then, toiling under a moon that was almost full, I set to work on the inch-and-a-half turnbuckle bolt connecting the tower's supporting cables with the buried cement "deadman". This part of the operation was tedious and time-consuming, but I knew just how long it would take.

The $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch cables were thick enough to withstand hurricane winds, and two of them ran upwards from each anchor point. The ceramic insulator at the base of the tower - within the transmitter building - would certainly withstand close to 100,000 pounds of thrust. For all practical purposes, the tower seemed indestructible.

But it had a weak point, and I knew it. The cables were stressed at upwards of 10,000 pounds—probably 11,000 for the top ones and maybe, 7,500 pounds for the lower set. The tower was perfectly safe, as long as the perfect balance of those three sets of cable was maintained.

But if one cable was cut, the equalized stress of the tower would be broken. Like an arrow

released from its bow, the tower would literally fly into the air, torn from its moorings.

At five minutes before nine, the first hacksaw blade broke. I put the pieces in my pocket and took out another one. Then I paused and stood back for a moment. I was too close to the final cut. Overhead, a cloud passed in front of the moon.

There was a noise like the far-off honking of geese, and I wondered if they might be flying south for the winter. If geese flew at night. Somehow I imagined the dark to be the domain of owls and bats and lovers and villains. Things were so much simpler in the daylight.

At four minutes past nine, I started sawing again with the fresh hacksaw blade. The cable whined and strained and then the turnbuckle bolt suddenly flew apart, almost knocking me over. I leaped backward as the cable shot straight up, into the night sky. The entire tower seemed alive, and with a horrible roar it lifted itself free of its remaining moorings.

I wondered what the President was saying at that moment.

AS I DROVE AWAY I could already hear the wailing of a distant fire engine. They called the fire department for any-

thing these days. It reminded me of the fire back home, of the charred look of utter desolation that had awaited me.

Then I noticed that the lights along the highway were out. The city itself seemed virtually blacked out, a reminder of my boyhood back home, when monthly air raid drills had added to the thrill of growing up in wartime. When I reached the motel to pick up Junie it, too, was in darkness. I found her waiting in the lobby with the suitcases.

"What happened?" I asked.

"I don't know. The power went off. And the radio station too. Just a few minutes after the TV."

"Let's get out of here. I want to find Waintop, and then we'll head west."

I arranged to pick up the rest of my money from Cain Waintop in the waiting room of the Littlefork railroad station. He had already figured that the F.B.I. and Secret Service might be watching airports, bus terminals and the like, but the station was a unique meeting place in a very Poe-esque sense. The last train out was at 8:10. Nobody would bother watching a railroad station where there were no trains.

"Stay in the car," I told Junie. "And keep the motor running, just in case." I un-

locked the glove compartment and slipped out a flat .32 automatic. I had always disliked guns, but other people disliked them too, and sometimes that could be an advantage.

"Be careful, Sam," she breathed. The streets were dark and almost deserted, as if the lack of light had struck fear into everyone. Somewhere another siren sounded, far off in the distance.

I opened the station door and walked down the few steps into the deserted waiting room. A single emergency spotlight lit one corner of the vast place, casting pale reflections on the marble floor, but otherwise the place was in darkness.

Ticket windows were shuttered in rows of barred cages, like a zoo with the animals gone home. The station had been built in another day, when both Littlefork and the railroads had dreamed of growing large. Someday now they would tear it down or convert it to a roller skating rink.

I waited in the most shadowed part of the room, thinking as the minutes ticked by that surely Cain Waintop would never come, thinking that he had fled or been arrested or had simply forgotten. But then the door above me opened once more, and his vast bulk filled the space, something

like a whale surfacing from the dark of the ocean.

"Hello, Sam," he said quietly. "You did well. Right on schedule."

"What happened to all the lights." I didn't get up, and he dropped onto the wooden bench at my side.

"We had other arrangements too, but your action was the key to it. You cut the President of the United States off the air. That was really something."

"Let's have the rest of the money."

He grunted as he reached into a bulky pocket. I accepted the envelope and counted quickly through the bills. There was a thousand extra. Not bad.

"You'd better go now, Sam."

"Can you tell me about it now?"

He smiled slightly. "Tell you what?"

"The power, the radio stations. What's happened?"

He moved and a shadow fell across his face. The room was very quiet. "Some people pulled switches. Others used bombs."

"Here? Here in Little fork?"

"All over. You see, Sam, you don't take over a country as big as this one by sneaking communists or fascists into a thousand key positions. You do it by getting a lot of people to do little things all by themselves. You get a telephone

operator in Los Angeles to cut out the circuits, and an unhappy man in Washington to press a button.

You hire a criminal in New York to start a fire, and you blackmail a woman in Salt Lake City into throwing a switch. Scattered people, all acting independently, out of loyalty or fear or conviction or simply for money."

"You mean it's like this all over?"

"The nation's communications — television, radio, newspapers, telephone — have been completely disrupted."

"Newspaper?"

"That's the main reason for the power failures — to keep the presses from running."

"Why did you need *me* with all these others?"

Cain Waintop smiled. "With the President speaking, there were too many Secret Service men at WWOW. We couldn't work from inside."

"You said you wouldn't harm him."

"The President? We won't. He may be useful later. But don't you see? No one will *know*. No one will know anything for the next day or two. And by that time it will be too late. Much too late."

I felt the gun in my pocket. He might have been mad, dreaming the whole thing up. It

might have been no more than a childhood fantasy.

"Who are you? I asked him. "What are you?"

"The dissatisfied," he answered. "We are always present, along with the destructors like yourself."

Now I knew he wasn't mad, and the gun came out of my pocket. I had to do something, or undo something. He saw the weapon and chuckled, and from the darkened doorway a rifle bolt slid home. I didn't wait to see who it was, but whirled and fired at the sound. A man screamed and toppled inside, down the steps. Then I was running.

"You fool!" Waintop shouted. "You can't stop us. No one can stop us!"

I leaped up over the body of the man with the rifle and sprinted toward Junie's car. "God, Sam! What is it?" Her hands were trembling on the wheel.

"Drive!" I shouted at her. "Drive!"

"Where?"

"Out of Littlefork. North. Canada can't be far."

There was no thought now of staying to fight. It was a time for running.

WE WERE ALMOST to the border by dawn, and here among the hills there was a certain calm

that drove the nightmare from my mind. It was peaceful among the changing trees, and even Junie must have sensed it as her sleeping head stirred on my shoulder.

"It's daylight," she said, speaking through a mouth still fuzzy with sleep.

"We'll be across the border in a half hour."

"Was it all a dream, Sam?"

"Maybe." I was staring hard at the deserted highway ahead. "But there hasn't been much traffic. Everybody seems to be staying inside."

"Isn't there somebody we could ask? The police, maybe?"

"I might not be too popular with the police about now. We'll go over the border for a

day or two and size things up. By then, Waintop and his crowd will probably be in jail somewhere."

We rounded a curve in the road, and ahead the autumn trees were a blaze of golds and yellows and browns, with just that touch of red. Soon we would be at the border.

"Sam!"

I saw them then, running from the woods on either side of the road. Men with rifles and pistols, wearing unfamiliar red armbands.

"Give me the gun," I told her, swerving the car off the road.

From somewhere far in the distance I thought I heard again the wail of a fire siren. But I couldn't be certain.

MIKE SHAYNE—Presents

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TICKET TO HARPERVILLE

by JERRY JACOBSON

Juney Lambro could no longer be legally executed for killing three cops. But for Juney a life sentence was almost as bad, for he was out to get the men who put him in prison. So, when he got a chance, he took it.

JUNEY LAMBRO WAS something of an authority on federal penitentiaries because they had been home and soul to him since his twentieth birthday, an unremarkable benchmark that was now ten years in his past. A "good can" could make a con's time soft as silk or hard as the concrete and brick around which men like Juney Lambro were wrapped.

What sort of guy was the warden? Was he a liberal? Would he bend a little? Did he go for inmate councils, a resi-

dent psychiatrist, minimum security? Could a guard be bought or were they hardnose and rulebook? Was the chow anything to write home about? Was there a gym? Could you get dope easily? Where was the line drawn on inmate fraternization?

These things a con learned to find out early. You had to orient yourself. You had to know your surroundings and you had to know your friends and most of all, you had to learn your enemies. The plant,

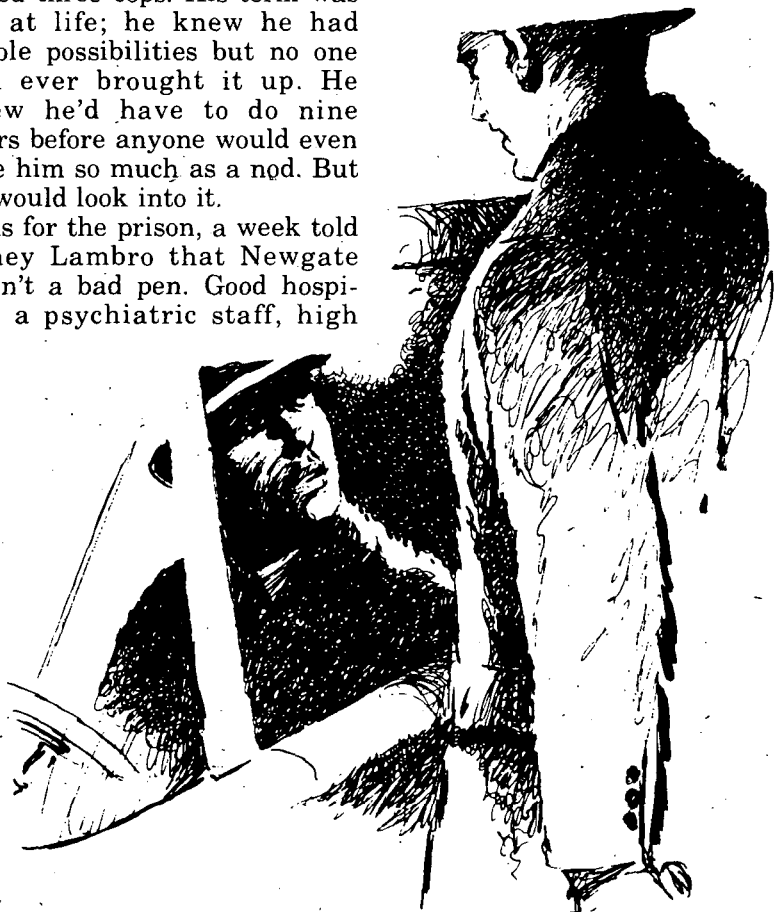
For The Really Smart Con, There Is Always A Way Out.

the person, or the personnel—you had to get a fast line on everything that was vital to the way you were going to live for the next few, confining years.

With Juney Lambro, that sum was more than a few. He'd killed three cops. His term was set at life; he knew he had parole possibilities but no one had ever brought it up. He knew he'd have to do nine years before anyone would even give him so much as a nod. But he would look into it.

As for the prison, a week told Juney Lambro that Newgate wasn't a bad pen. Good hospital, a psychiatric staff, high

school and college extension courses, dayrooms that didn't look like places where you were dumped for three hours, in a bare corner of a bare room, so they could tick you down for your recreation period.



The chow was good, plenty of meat—and it looked as if you could work yourself into a pretty good job if you connected with all the right people. Nine years you didn't do standing on your neck. But it looked like it might be a pretty good little blow in the breeze.

Newgate's capital offenders were housed in what once was death row, a double tier of twenty cells each, one man to a cell, facing a concrete wall across a gulf of walkway patrolled by four guards per eight-hour shift. They carried side pieces and twenty gauges along the bulkhead and they also had gas cannisters in case anybody got a bit out of line. The block was electrically controlled down below from a glassed-in control hall behind a safe-zone corridor just beyond the gates. You couldn't break out of Newgate's maximum with an H-bomb in your hip pocket and the warden's kids tucked under one arm.

Lambro had been slammed into less accomodating rooms. He had a sink and a toilet, a bunk with a sponge rubber mattress and two sheets and a plump down pillow. The con who'd had it before him had left some books on a shelf above the sink—some James Bond novels and some spine-bent Agatha Christies. Cons ate mysteries

like food. Lambro wasn't chucking them out the door.

He was topside. The cells were concrete on three sides, but none of the guards minded talking between cons cell-to-cell. The con to Lambro's left was named Mingo Green. He had killed a man and his wife in a bar on Chicago's South Side, emptied a .45 into them and then half of a second clip. The woman was his ex-wife, the man his brother. When he lost her, he had nothing left to lose, so he had simply put a swift end to them both.

"IT'S A PRETTY GOOD can, Lambro," he told Juney the first day they dropped him in. "Getting out of max, that's the real ticket here. Get the privileges, that's the trip. Dining room, rec room, the gyms, the courtyards. You gotta keep clean in here a couple years and then they gotta punch your ticket outa here. No way they can refuse, or the A.C.L.U. comes down on them for cruel and inhumane treatment. My lawyer says that, and he's no Parker Brothers graduate."

The man housed to Lambro's right was a man to be reckoned with. His name was Kosko Gasparovich, and he had been in maximum security eighteen months. He had killed a teller, a bank guard and a street

pedestrian in a thwarted bank robbery in California.

For the past eight weeks he had been the recipient of "minimum privileges", which meant he could go to a job (printing and lithography, where he was learning to operate a massive multi-lith press), eat in the dining hall and use the prison's recreational facilities at specified times without close supervision. Gasparovich also ran the prison's heroin traffic and dealt in commodities from the prison store.

"Getting off the row is nothing but pretending you're not crazy, Lambro," he told Juney, after a week of sizing him up. "That's all it is."

"No fuss, no muss and eat all your vegetables, is that it?"

"You got it, buddy," said Gasparovich. "I'll be running things here. In time—a few weeks, a few months. I come in with capital—cash. People go cheap here, a lot of them go plenty cheap."

"What'll I do here?" Lambro asked. "Two years? Is that what the book says?"

"No book here, Lambro. Don't get no distorted view of this place, kid. It's a soft can and everybody and his cousin has his hand out. You killed cops, I heard. That right?"

"Three of them," Lambro told

him, careful not to seem boastful. "In Idaho. There I was, going along, singing a song—and I get nailed for a job I didn't do. They come to my apartment, where I was living with this Indian chick, a full-blood Cherokee. My Cherokee Rose, I called her. She was a dancer.

"You look at her thirty seconds, and she'll make you a damn man-and-a-half and have you baying at the moon. Somebody did a liquor store and an old warrior used to be her chief said it was me. They came around noon, the cops, and it looked like a Rockefeller family reunion. I just clipped them off as they came in the door."

"Dumb?"

"A Chinese fire-drill," said Lambro. "Dumb cops. I had a public defender—a jerk. The judge pulled his strings right from the gavel. A judge named Demmerest. And the lawyer was named Quinn. I get out of here, they're dead men."

Gasparovich tossed a foul laugh down the corridor. "Parole? Not out of Warden Kyle, friend. He's been bought by the Board. And *they* want the death penalty back so bad, it's a taste between their teeth. No capital offenders will ever get out of Newgate by the front gate. That's Kyle's Law."

That was a setback Lambro

hadn't figured on. He figured to do a good brace of time—five years, ten at the outside—but this no-parole business shocked him like a run at a solid wall. "You mean *nobody* gets off?"

"Nobody," said Gasparovich. "Kyle and the Board would like to burn all of us. Take us right up to the chair, the whole string of us and juice us at one-minute intervals. Or have us all trucked off to a capital punishment state at midnight."

"So what's the options?" said Lambro.

"I tell you *that*, Lambro, I blow my game," said Gasparovich, his voice a leer in lieu of his unseen face. "Man to my right. Name was Kelly—Phil Kelly. Busted out of here two months ago. Busted out clean. Not a hole in him."

"How?" was Lambro's only question.

"*How*? You may learn later, Lambro. The *who* was Gatano. Artie Gatano. He ran this pen. He had logistics, he had people. Got Kelly out down by the steam generator plant, that's southside. Opened a sewer culvert. You never *saw* so many guards someplace else when it went down! Gatano died two weeks ago. Stomach cancer. We had a fine service for him in the chapel. Wasn't a con didn't turn out for it."

Lambro grunted.

"I'm Gatano's pick," said Gasparovich. "Maybe it's because we're both Italian, maybe it's 'cause of my killings. But he took to me. I got his books, I got his guards, I got his dope, I got his store business. I got it all, Lambro."

"And I got this hole for the next two years," moaned Lambro.

Gasparovich's voice then turned low, confidential. Lambro had to move to the extreme right edge of his cubicle to pick up his words.

"Kelly," whispered Gasparovich "he got the steer. He got the word. The *rumor*. Like we all got it."

"The *rumor*?" said Lambro.

"It's—a place," said Gasparovich, "a town. Not even that. It's a corner. A couple of houses, a bar, maybe a railroad depot and a barber shop. Who knows *what* it is? But I can tell you *one* thing. It's a place where it ain't like spending the rest of your life in a tow away zone."

"What's this place called?" Lambro asked.

"Harperville. Southwest part of the state." Gasparovich's whispers came lower and softer. "Ain't on no map. Ain't even a town. But there a con can find—help."

"Help?"

"For us capital offenders,"

whispered Gasparovich. "You get the works there in Harperville. A new name, new papers. Social security card, driver's license, birth certificate, everything. Plastic surgery if you want it. Credentials for a profession. Anything—doctor, lawyer, college teacher, anything you want. You go into this Harperville a fugitive, you come out a totally new human being."

"Cost," said Lambro, who knew precisely how the world ran and what it took to get what one wanted in it. "How much?"

"It's mob," said Gasparovich. "It's free. The syndicate runs it. Who knows? Philly, Detroit, L.A.? Who knows? The point is, Lambro, it's the con's haven. Harperville—don't forget it, Lambro. It can save your life and make you a new one!"

BUT IT WAS THE present life Juney Lambro bemoaned. Two men out there in the wider freer world had to be killed, a foul judge and a puppet public defender—and Lambro's current state wasn't bringing them any closer to death. He wondered about this Harperville, this convict haven Gasparovich spoke about in such vague and guarded terms.

Across the state ran Lambro's mind's eye, to its southwest



corner. There was his ticket to the killings. If he could get out of Newgate cleanly, after he got out of Maximum Security—and then, from outside, somehow to Harperville...

Kosko Gasparovich was moved to A-Block six weeks later. He was too valuable a man in the Litho Shop to be only intermittently free on minimum privileges.

"I'll see what I can do for you, Lambro," he promised. "About springing you from Max early. They keep you cooped up here too long and you end up with a chicken brain."

Lambro kept in mind what he'd been told about cooperating, about fitting into the system, about not acting like a

crazy person. He was docile, passive, he went along. He created no disturbances.

The state's federal court determined the sentences of major offenders—kidnappers, rapists, arsonists, murderers. In almost all cases their sentences were reinforced by the Prison Authority. Lambro knew there would be a determination at the end of his first year in Newgate. He saw a thin ray of hope ahead and he fixed his eyes upon it as a man lost in darkness glues his eyes to a pinpoint of light miles away.

WARDEN KYLE was a quiet-spoken man. His build was spare, almost frail. He looked like someone's aging mailman. He wore a black suit and a pinched little black vest and he allowed Juney Lambro to smoke.

"The Inmate Council has put up commendable marks for your first year here at Newgate, Mr. Lambro. It's their feeling, and mine, that you can now move out into the general prison population."

"I've tried my best to adjust, Warden Kyle."

"You've created a fine start here, Mr. Lambro." The warden stopped speaking. He coughed, clearing his throat, indicating a move to a fresh subject. "Now, as for the setting of your term,

Mr. Lambro. Considering the gravity of your offenses, I regret to tell you that no adjustment can be made at this time."

Juney Lambro's heart sank. "Yes, sir," he said dismally.

"The life-term remains, of course. With no parole options. You still have an avenue of appeal open to you through the Board of Prison Terms and Paroles, which convenes here at the prison monthly. I advise you to exercise this option, Mr. Lambro. We encourage all inmates to employ their options. If you like, I will schedule you for interviews."

"Yes, sir," said Lambro. "I'd like an opportunity to state my case."

Warden Kyle opened a manila ledger and jotted down some data. "Your interviews will be held on March ninth, at ten a.m.," he told Juney Lambro. "A four-member panel will hear your arguments for a reduction of sentence and a change in your parole status. Since I have already made a recommendation, I will not be sitting on the panel. You must gain three votes out of four for a review of your term and parole status."

"I understand, sir."

It was Juney Lambro's longest month. He gained one good break. Kosko Gasparovich was able to get him job-training

in the Litho Shop, as a press maintenance apprentice.

His interviews finally came. They lasted two hours. These men seemed to have every tiny fact of his life before them—folders, files, notes, affidavits, court transcripts, statements. The entire world seemed drawn against him. He could not breathe, he could not think straight, he could not speak with any real logic in his own defense.

Their decision, when it came, was like the falling of an axe-blade seen by Lambro all the way down its long descent.

"Mr. Lambro, this board finds that there may be some possibility of your rehabilitation in the near future. In your first year, you have shown a sincere desire to adjust. Your conduct is without fault and prison staff indicate no infractions against you in that time.

"However, we have a serious matter here, involving threats made by you during and after your trial for the murders of these police officers. These threats were directed against the federal judge who presided at your trial and against the public defender assigned you by the court. At this point, Mr. Lambro, we must regard these threats seriously and therefore must provide some protection for the men against whom your



threats were lodged in court.

This board, acting upon these factors, recommends psychiatric treatment, along with active, rehabilitative program and reevaluation of your progress at the end of five years of your term. These decisions are not easy ones to reach, Mr. Lambro and the board wishes to thank you for your patience. You may return to your work assignment."

Five years! Without any intervening appeals! Lambro's hope and resolve drained from him like a sink stopper being pulled. He knew he couldn't do five years at Newgate without

flipping out. He had to get to Harperville.

He was taken back to Maximum Security to pick up his books and toilet items. A new kid had been moved into the cell formerly occupied by Kosko Gasparovich. He was a bony, scared kid named Banchero, who had killed a pharmacist over a handful of pills.

"Just don't go crazy in here, kid," Lambro told him. "Rack up the brownie points and you'll be out of here in no time. And don't forget what I told you about—the place."

"Harperville," the kid whispered softly. "I'll be there before any of you."

"That's the ticket, kid."

Gasparovich could spring Lambro to Harperville, but Lambro knew you didn't back a man like Kosko Gasparovich up against any walls. He was a man who dealt favors only for favors done. You had to chalk something up first, make a mark, show yourself a digit rising above ciphers.

Juney Lambro assessed his value, his skills. He could do only one thing well. He could hurt people. Without fuss or trepidation, without any twinge of conscience, he could injure people.

So Juney Lambro, certain of the avenue to Gasparovich's favor, kept his eyes and ears

open. Gasparovich, he knew, was having some minor trouble with Gresham, the guard who was stores superintendent. Gresham doctored his invoices and manifests so that Gasparovich each week received fifty cartons of cigarets in exchange for Gasparovich's studied hunches on the trafficking in drugs inside the walls.

Gasparovich was amenable. His own commerce was increased while the competition was eliminated. But Gresham was wavering in his loyalties. He was two weeks in arrears in his cigaret deliveries to Gasparovich. Someone in the community was turning a few tables, moving tentatively up the pyramid of power.

The choices narrowed down to three new inmates, then down to one, a lightweight New Jersey extortionist named Snake Commeaux. Lambro had the names and numbers of all the players. He needed to know no more.

He cornered Gresham one afternoon on the backside of the machine shop, outside in brilliant sunshine, alone. He caught him from behind with a brutal chop to the neck.

"It's all use and abuse in here, Gresham," Lambro told the guard as he ran him against a concrete wall and watched him sink to the pave-

ment. "Gasparovich is unhappy about the new negotiations with Snake Commeaux.

"I get tremendous relief out of this sort of thing, Gresham. I enjoy hurting people. It's my stock in trade. I hurt enough people, I can even go without eating. You owe Gasparovich a hundred cartons of smokes. Gasparovich wants the avenues of commerce reopened. Or your wife and kids cry all over your casket."

Before leaving him, Juney Lambro punctuated the seriousness of the issue by slamming Gresham's head against the unyielding wall three times until he felt the skull crack in his fingertips.

HE STALKED Snake Commeaux for three days until he got him alone in a rest room in the Arts and Crafts Ceter. The man reeked of expensive cologne, a wisp of an encyclopedia rip-off artist caught with his game in disrepair. Lambro sauntered into the rest room while Commeaux was drying his dainty little hands beneath the nozzle of a warm-air blower. He ran Commeaux's thin body against the nozzle and felt ecstasy when a chest bone cracked.

"Commeaux, we haven't met formally. My name's Lambro—Juney Lambro. I was the one who put Gresham in for a brain



scan and brought the neurologist in from Denver."

Commeaux was a first-class cream puff. He would have crawled all the way back to his cellblock if Lambro had let him. But Lambro had nothing of the sort in mind.

"You cut yourself in on a rancid piece of cake here, Commeaux, and you got icing all over your fingers. You owe Kosko Gasparovich a hundred cartons of cigarets. He wants them by tomorrow noon, or bits and pieces of you are going to turn up all over this facility, and I'm the one who's going to do the piecework and the distribution."

Commeaux tried to speak but the wind was still knocked out of him.

Lambro smiled. "Don't talk, Commeaux. Catch your breath. You're going to need it."

Lambro filled a sink with water, then yanked Commeaux over to the bowl and plunged his head down into the pool. He did it five times, each dunk a little longer, so that Commeaux might have the experience of being close to death. Commeaux began to bleed from the nose and it filled the bowl with bright red. Lambro was fascinated by the sight.

"Go home and think it all over, now," Juney Lambro told Commeaux when he figured the

man was terrified enough. "You come down to Gasparovich's house by noon tomorrow. You come prepared to make arrangements for the transfer of merchandise, or New Jersey loses a disfavored son."

Two days later, Gasparovich wanted to speak with Juney Lambro in his well-appointed cell. He had a stereo and whiskey and a Japanese color television.

"You like twelve-year-old Canadian blend, Lambro? You like Led Zeppelin rock?"

They sat and had both. Both were mellow and rich and miles above their shabby world where lived only the users and the pitifully used.

"Rumor gets to me, Lambro, that you're a messenger. Is that right?"

"Deliverance," said Juney Lambro, without emotion. "I issue deliverance."

"Yesterday, a strange thing happened to me," said Gasparovich. "Yesterday, I took delivery on two hundred cartons of cigarets. I had guests."

"I can't imagine," said Lambro, sipping his whiskey.

"A guard named Gresham was a visitor. And a new con named Snake Commeaux. They appeared to be injured."

"Injuries make men docile."

"Accidents, Lambro?"

"Accidents will happen," said

Lambro. "This is a dangerous world in here. Things can—befall people."

Gasparovich laughed and refilled Lambro's glass. He searched the younger man's eyes.

"We're going out," he said then, with simple directness. "To Harperville. Saturday night. Ten o'clock."

Juney Lambro felt a rush of heat come to his cheeks, his chest, his troubled soul. "I want in on it," he said to Gasparovich and felt his life flee to the palms of this important man's hands.

Gasparovich dropped his head. "I'm sorry, Lambro. Capital. It takes cash. It's been spread around already. Lots of it. It's insurance, Lambro. And the premiums—what can I tell you? They'd make a rich man cry and come up short."

Juney Lambro found himself leaning forward, his hands gripping the other man's wrists. "I *have* to go!" he pleaded to Gasparovich in a whisper that screamed. "I *have* to get to Harperville!"

Gasparovich wrestled free of Juney Lambro's grip, but was not angered. "Lambro—you don't listen! What speaks here at Newgate is capital. Merchandise. Property. The things you control, the *people* you control."

Juney Lambro saw his golden opportunity turning to rust, dying. His eyes pleaded. They were moist. "Gasparovich! I'm *doomed* here! The rest of my days. I got no options. I killed cops and that's got my ticket punched here at Newgate for life! *For the rest of my life!*"

"I appreciate what you did for me with Gresham and Snake Commeaux, kid. I can give you some action. My stores business. You can net six hundred a month. I give you my payoffs book."

Juney Lambro was lying in the final ditch and he knew it. He took Kosko Gasparovich's cheeks in his hands and began to cry without shame. "What is *money* to me! *Paper!* I can spend fifty years counting money right into my *grave!*"

Gasparovich removed the hands softly. "Lambro. Listen to the way things work in here. You have nothing to offer. You have nothing negotiable."

"I have."

"What? You have nothing. I can't use you. Something has to go into the bank, Lambro."

Juney Lambro saw his ray of hope. The light down the distant tunnel was graspable. Yes, he had only that skill, only the one thing he did well.

"I can negotiate," he said to Kosko Gasparovich. "I can deal."

"Deal with *what*, Lambro?"

"I can kill people. Anyone you want. I'm systematic. I'm pure at it."

Gasparovich ran a slow index finger across his lower lip. His eyes were a lazer beam into Lambro's. "Anyone?"

"I turn my back and walk away. It doesn't matter who it is. I make plans at it. I take my time. I can work from a photograph, a bare last name, a section of a city. I don't disappoint."

Gasparovich ran a slow stream of whiskey into his glass. He sought the truth in Lambro's eyes. "There is some business that needs attention," he said to Lambro. "A woman—and a man."

Lambro gulped his dregs. "I can do it. Anyone! I have to kill a judge and a lawyer first. But I can do it. Clean and fast. And no one sees anything, knows anything. I enjoy killing."

Kosko Gasparovich fell back upon his bunk. For several minutes he did not speak. Juney Lambro felt the tightness in the room, the same breathless tightness he had felt at his interviews. A decision was on its way. It could deal him salvation or it could deal him damnation for a lifetime.

Finally, after an eternity had waned, Kosko Gasparovich spoke. "We have a third man

going. Vinnie Durst. He knows inks and papers. He thinks we can do some acceptable counterfeiting. In Miami. After we put ourselves through the program at Harperville."

Juney Lambro found he could breathe again.

"We have a press breakdown in the Litho Shop Saturday night," Gasparovich elaborated. "The oil wells have been kept low all week, and we got a big beer-can printing starting Friday."

Lambro knew his multi-lith presses now like the back of his hand. "A bearing burnout?"

"And the press rollers. There'll be an ink fire, since no oil will be fed," said Gasparovich. "From the Litho Shop we take a staff car out the main gate. It's all arranged. We take a hostage guard. He's been paid, as well as the two guards in Security Control. We go flying through like low birds."

"They show us authorized-missing from the cellblock?" said Lambro. "For the fire?"

"It's all paid for, Lambro. Everybody's bought. It's almost like they gave us the red carpet. Make it easier than sin for us."

Juney Lambro took Gasparovich's hand and shook it vigorously. "I won't let you down, Kosko. I mean it. What I did to Gresham and Snake

Commeaux was just finger exercises. You'll see."

They had one more drink. To Juney Lambro it tasted of the fruit of victory. They were about to follow in the footsteps of Phil Kelly and all the others who had gone before. They were going to Harperville.

THE FAST-MOVING sedan cut through the black midwestern night like a low-flying bullet. At the wheel, Juney Lambro's fierce intent upon the roadway was almost maniacal, while beside him Kosko Gasparovich studied a road map under the minute glare of a pen-sized flashlight.

"We'll keep heading to the southwest," he instructed Lambro. "Through all these small towns. Farmland, Green Hill, Case City, Wheatly."

"How far?"

"We'll stop in Wheatly, about three hundred miles."

"Ask someone?" Lambro said.

"We have to be careful about that. About who we talk to. Somebody who isn't sympathetic . . ."

In the back seat, Vinnie Durst was still sky-high with elation and wonder over the incredible ease of their escape. "I never seen a bust-out like that one, Gassy! The car, parked there back of the Litho Shop like a Christmas present, those



wall guards eyeing us all the way out to the gate. Gassy, you musta bought the whole damned prison staff!"

"I spread the bread around." Gasparovich sounded smug.

"It was almost like they wanted us to leave," said Juney Lambro, wondering why he should make such a statement

and then passing the matter out of mind.

They moved on through the envelope of darkness, through an area where dogs bayed forlornly and houses kept their distance from one another on steep hillsides and in the deep gashes of ravines. No cars followed and none passed. It was almost as if they had driven over the edge of the world.

At midnight, they stopped for gas, cutting onto a major parkway and then back onto the thin, damaged ribbon of back highway.

At one a.m. the car's headlights trapped a ramshackle sign leaning into a hillside—
WELCOME TO WHEATLEY. POP. 112.

"Won't be nothing open around here at this hour," Vinnie Durst said.

"Nobody up but burglars and bad women," said Lambro.

"Ought to be a bar or a coffee shop," said Gasparovich. "A main drag *someplace*."

There was a main drag. It began and ended all in the same city block. A church, a tavern, a hole-in-the-wall little restaurant with a grease-fogged little square of window, a general store, another sleepy gas station. At the curb in front of the restaurant a police car was parked, a ten-year-old Plymouth caked with a thick layer of dirt.

"People in the restaurant," observed Kosko Gasparovich. "A cop and a cook."

"Having the big breakfast, as Hemingway would say," laughed Vinnie Durst.

"Who's Hemingway?" June Lambro asked.

Inside, the three of them took seats at the counter. That left one empty stool. The cook wiped his sweaty forehead and then transferred the sweat on his palm to his apron front. The cop gave them a bored look and then sank back into his coffee cup.

The cook wandered down the counter. "Gents?"

"Three coffees," said Kosko Gasparovich.

"Going to eat? Gotta know now. The grill's off."

"Just coffees," said Gasparovich.

The cop stretched and looked at his watch. He looked out at the street—or stole a look at all three of them. It was hard to tell which.

"Zeke?" he said to no one in particular, rising.

"Tod?" said the cook in return.

"See ya' later. Gonna go out and catch some crooks."

"Be quiet about it. Folks need their sleep."

They had more coffee. An old clock clicked on a wall. A radio gave out hog prices and egg

production. The police car was gone from the curb.

"Cook?" said Gasparovich in another minute.

He came down the counter again.

"We got ourselves a little lost back there. Back at about Farmland."

"What are you looking for?"

"Place called Harperville," said Gasparovich.

The dull eyes seemed to register a flash of recognition, but it might have been illusory. "Not much over to Harperville," the cook considered.

"Got an old friend living over there," said Gasparovich. "An old Army buddy."

"That right?"

"We was in the Ardennes together," said Gasparovich. "In forty-five."

"Could give you directions there, I suppose."

"We'd certainly appreciate that."

The cook yanked a paper napkin from a stainless steel dispenser on the counter and a pencil from behind his ear.

"On down the road about twelve miles, you come on Hunt Junction," he told Gasparovich, diagramming as he spoke. "You take it, left. Then, up over Serpentine Hill, past the Hoavland place. You'll see his string of chicken coops. Then on down the other side."

The cook paused to rewet the tip of his pencil. "About six miles down the back side of Serpentine, you come to Crowder Road. Turn right and go nine miles. Don't let the fact you don't see nothing bother you. Ain't nothing to see. Until Harperville."

"Which is *where*?" said Gasparovich with some irritation.

"Right *there*, gent. Down Crowder Road. Old grain mill, Turborg's Gas Station and the old Crowder Road Store. When you see it, you'll know it."

They finished off their coffee and Kosko Gasparovich tossed a five-dollar bill on the counter-top.

"Keep it," he told the cook, "for the information."

"This old Army buddy. You didn't say where he lives."

"That's right. I didn't," Gasparovich said.

Twelve miles to Hunt Junction. Left, up over Serpentine Hill. Past Hoavland's chicken ranch, a ghostly group of low white buildings. Back down Serpentine, to narrow, unlit Crowder Road. Then right.

"About nine miles, Lambro," said Gasparovich. "Keep an eye on the odometer."

Deeper into the funnel of darkness they moved. Juney Lambro jumped when he saw a huge, dark bird fly up across the windshield suddenly and

vanish into the darker dark of woods. He wasn't exactly getting a case of the creeps—on the other hand, he'd be glad when this confusing midnight trip was over.

Five minutes later, Gasparovich called his attention to something. "A clearing up ahead. On the right. Maybe buildings. Slow down, Lambro."

Obediently, Juney Lambro came down lightly on the brake pedal.

"Looks like the general store," said Durst from the back, where he had been dozing. "The gas station's just a little bit past it. Now we're *getting* somewhere!"

"Swing onto the shoulder in front of the store," said Gasparovich.

"Isn't that a guy standing on the porch?" said Durst.

"Looks like," said Gasparovich. He snaked the .45 caliber automatic out of his belt in case there was going to be trouble.

HE WAS AN older man, who hobbled badly coming down the stairs and across the gravel. Gasparovich rolled down the window on his side. Juney Lambro cut off the motor of the sedan.

The old man wore bibbed overalls. He had his thumbs hooked in their top as he bent

down and peered into the darkened car.

"You the three from Newgate?" he said. "The ones asked about Harperville back in Wheatly?"

"You know about us already?" said Gasparovich.

"Oh, you been expected, all right. Got a call from Zeke at the restaurant. He said you was on the way. We better get you down to the mill before anybody comes, the Highway Patrol or anybody. You can run your car up there between the grocery and the gas station."

The other two got out. Juney Lambro drove the prison sedan up into a narrow niche between the two buildings, then walked back to the cluster of men.

"Got a friend of yours down there going through the processing," the old-timer was commenting. "Guy named Phil Kelly. Some others been through you probably acquainted with, too, I expect. Well, better be going. Got a long, little stroll."

"Harperville," said Gasparovich, breathing a deep sigh of relief. "We *made* it!"

In single file, they crossed the roadway, the old man leading them down a steep path through a fat squad of devilwoods. Loons cried in the shadowed bush and small, frightened things scurried and

fled to be out of human way.

There wasn't any remote reason why June Lambro should feel apprehension, but he did. Weren't they nearly home free? Hadn't the secret, elusive Harperville been reached? The very fact that it had all gone so perfectly, so compatibly, made him uneasy, and it was hard to pass the uneasiness from his mind.

One thing he knew. He knew he'd feel better once he was away from this country of cold hills and dismal isolation. He was thinking of better climes—Las Vegas, Reno, Miami. Action. That was the medicine to make him fit again, after his business was taken care of.

The old grain mill lay like a stone fortress in the valley. The stream which ran beside it was now a thin vein of slow water where once a full-grown river had raged.

They were led across a brief bridge of tired timbers. The old man paused to unlock a square of door cut in the mill's wall.

"We got two good men doing the processing. A Mr. Erickson and a Mr. Pryne. They know their business down here."

It was a nice, professional setup, June Lambro could see. Well-hidden, secure, modern. A maze of electrical wiring ran into the building's southside. He decided they were probably

feeding clandestinely off the valley's main power supply.

An open door led into a larger building. A thin staircase led down. Lambro could see the squat steel form of a power generator. A pro layout, every bit of it.

At the foot of the staircase, the old man paused and pressed a small ivory bell set in a block of wood.

"Be just a minute, gents," he told them. "They got to come up from the back. That's where everything's set up."

No one minded or seemed impatient. They were too road-weary and tired to register impatience.

Only a single man appeared. He wore a dress shirt with the sleeves rolled up and a necktie pulled down for work.

"I'm Erickson," he said politely. "We've been 'expecting you, of course. We've been getting things ready."

The three men introduced themselves. Erickson frowned at sight of Kosko-Gasparovich's pistol and he put out his hand. "There's no need for anything like that here, Mr. Gasparovich."

"Oh—sure. Sorry." Gasparovich handed the gun over dutifully. He didn't want anything to go against them now—not at this late date.

"Gentlemen? If you'll just

come this way, please, we'll get the program under way."

They followed him through a maze of high-ceiling corridors, avenues that were warm and well-lit and which hummed with mechanical activity. Juneey Lambro wondered how many escapees were being housed here in preparation for their surreptitious return to society? Ten? Twenty?

The men were escorted into rooms, one man to a room. Lambro was impressed. Carpets, color television, a brief kitchen with a refrigerator and stove. Food in the refrigerator, canned goods stocked in cupboards, even a tiled shower stall. The syndicate had taken care of everything. It was lush and first-rate.

Lambro stripped and luxuriated in a hot shower. The water steamed the sweat, road-grime and tension from his body. He turned back the covers on the bed and then went to the kitchen and concocted a fat sandwich of ham, turkey and Swiss cheese, which he wolfed down with two bottles of beer. As far as he was concerned, they could take their sweet time with *his* processing. After the barren five years at Newgate, this was rich, fine decompression.

He smoked a cigaret with another beer and felt the

fatigue in his bones. He would have no trouble sleeping tonight. He got up from a chair and tested the bed. Good inner-spring mattress, queen-sized. He'd sprawl and use the whole damned thing this night.

He used it, but not long, perhaps only a half-hour. He awoke groggily to the sound of a key being rattled in his door. Locked? He hadn't even thought to try it.

The man with Erickson introduced himself as Pryne and asked Lambro if he found his accommodations acceptable.

"More than acceptable," said Juneey Lambro. "You got a damn country club here."

"We're glad, Mr. Lambro."

If they were so glad, why was Mr. Erickson now brandishing a pistol? Pointed in Lambro's direction?

"Please place your hands behind you, Mr. Lambro," said Erickson, with soft menace.

The handcuffs were applied to his wrists deftly, without pain. What sort of processing *was* this anyway?

"Your stay was to have been much longer, Mr. Lambro, but when your files were reviewed, it was discovered that your capital offenses were really too many and too heinous."

For a moment, the lights in the room went dim. At first Lambro thought the power

plant was failing. Then the horror of it hit home and he grew immediately sick to his stomach. *Of course* it had all gone too smoothly! *Of course* everyone at Newgate had cooperated!

"Phil Kelly," said Mr. Pryne, making a brief gesture. "He's scheduled for tonight. Yes, Mr. Lambro. We're loosely associated with the prison. Thanks to the wholesale scrapping of the death penalty, the law had to be—circumvented. It was we who started the rumors about the sanctuary at Harperville. And it's the prison staff who makes escapes by capital offenders so easy."

Erickson was smiling tightly now as he gestured toward the door. "We'll have to go now, Mr. Lambro. It's your time. It's not gas, Mr. Lambro, nothing slow and painful. Electrocution. It will all go well, Mr. Lambro, you'll see."

"And you did have a fine, last meal we note," said Mr. Pryne. "Had you not eaten, you would have been extended that final courtesy."

Lambro saw Erickson open the door and gesture with apologetic eyes. The lights came back up abruptly, making him blink.

"If you're ready, Mr. Lambro," he said.

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MATINEE

Carla and Alan were happily married, but not to each other. Still, they were very happy together until Carla found the corpse lying in the motel shower.

by RUTH WISSMANN

"IT ISN'T MY FAULT I fell in love with you," Carla said. She placed her elbow on the pillow, her chin in her hand and gazed at the man on the bed beside her. "I didn't want to. I really didn't want to become involved like this. It just—happened."

He smiled and rumbled her hair. "But you aren't sorry," he said. "I know you aren't."

She sighed, sat up and swung her legs from the side of the bed, and after a moment of quiet reflection, said, "No, I'm not sorry, Alan, but I'm not happy either."

"It's one of those things, baby," he said. "You'll get over it—the worry, I mean. That's

what you're referring to again. Right?" She nodded.

"Sometimes," she said, "I look at Tom and get the most God-awful feeling that he knows about us."

"I should hope not! Aw—he couldn't."

A frown shadowed her face. "I know. At least, I don't see how..."

"We've been careful." He spoke in a relaxed, contented tone of voice.

"Yes. Careful and foolish and selfish and—"

"Come on now. No self-contempt, please."

Looking around the motel room, Carla said, "I'm always



afraid someone I know will see me driving in here. I've even had nightmares about it—and about being followed, too.”

“Let’s hope you don’t talk in your sleep.” An amused smile played around his lips and eyes.

“Oh, lord! I should hope not. Alan, aren’t you ever worried about Lisa finding out about us?”

He laughed and shook his head. “She’d kill me, baby. I don’t let myself think about it. This is a chance we have to take, honey. But I believe that everything is chance. Life itself is a chance. What the hell! We can’t worry all the time about what *might* happen. It would spoil these afternoons for us—these matinées.”

“True.” She sounded uncertain as she stood up. Then, frowning at her wristwatch, “It’s getting late. We’d better shower and be on our way. I have to get home in time to cook dinner and. . .”

“Okay, my sweet. If you have to, you have to.”

It was Carla who opened the shower door. It was Alan who gasped and clamped a hand over her mouth before the scream really exploded. What they saw would be stabbing their minds for the rest of their lives.

The limp form lying there stared at them with sightless

eyes, a bullet hole in its forehead. Here was a deathly white, bloody red shock dressed in black trousers and a gray shirt. Carla was not conscious of Alan’s closing the shower door, but he had. Yet she could still see the grotesque, gruesome body. There was no stopping the wave of hysteria that surged to the surface.

Above the torment wracking her mind she heard his words. “*Please! My God! Someone will hear you! Be quiet!*” He held her to him while his eyes circled the room quickly as if looking for an escape route where there was none. “*Jesus!*” he said with disbelief. “What’ll we do? What in hell are we going to do?”

She was shaking and crying, and he felt her skin turning cold and clammy. “Get dressed, Carla,” he said in a voice that had become tense and sharp. “We’ve got to get the hell out of here fast as we can.”

“I know,” she sobbed. “I know, I know!” When he released her, she found that her arms and legs seemed to have turned to water, her fingers to icicles. “It’s so awful! So ghastly! That—that *man!*” Her heart was thrashing inside her chest, her throat, her ears. Her face was without color. “Alan—I—I think I’m going to—faint.” to—faint.”

"Listen to me," he said, gripping her shoulders in his cold hands. "This is no time to black out. We've got to run for it, and don't panic. Just don't panic."

"Yes, but—" she stared at him with tortured eyes, "—shouldn't we call the police—or someone?"

He looked at her incredulously as he reached for his clothes. "The police?" he said. "You've got to be *crazy*! I don't think you realize the jam we're in."

"But, Alan—that man's been *murdered*! He's been shot in the head!"

"Oh, *God*!" He turned his eyes toward the ceiling. "I know you're not overly bright, but—just get yourself dressed and hurry." He paused and frowned at the shower door, his eyes dark with apprehension. "We've got to think," he said as though speaking to himself. "Yeah—wait a minute. We. . ."

"We can think later," she told him as she tried to brush at her tears and fumbled with the zipper of her skirt. "After we get away we can—"

He shook his head. "It's not that simple. We *can't* just leave here. We can't just walk out and leave a dead body behind us to. . ."

She swallowed with effort and the horror of their predicament began to twist in her

mind. "*Alan!*" she gasped. "We'll be *caught*, won't we? And it'll all come out about us. The manager of this place will tell, and the police will come after us, and there'll be questions, and Tom will find out, and then—"

"Shut *up*!" I've got to *think*. I can't think when you're talking."

"But Alan, I've got to get *out* of here. I don't want to get mixed up in a murder. I don't want Tom to—" Then the tears flowed again and she heard Alan speaking, and there was no sympathy in his words.

"What about *me*? You think *you're* in trouble—what's this kind of publicity going to do for me at the studio? Let alone with Lisa and that temper of hers."

Now his eyes seemed to be looking at Carla without seeing her. Watching the lines that fear was etching in his face she said, "You're scared. I don't like to see a man scared. Oh, Alan! Think of *something*! We have to get away from here—from that. . ." She swallowed with difficulty and found her throat had become dry and nearly paralyzed, that it was difficult to speak.

He shook his head and finished dressing in silence.

"Alan, whoever was in this room before us must have

killed that man, so why don't you just go to the office and tell the—the manager the truth. Tell him what we found, and—"

"Good God!" He spoke with disgust. "Why do you think he'd believe me?"

"Well, I don't know—but he'd have the name of the person who checked into this room before we did, so—"

"Names, hell! Probably as phoney as the one I've used. Oh, why? Why did *we* have the stinking luck to find that stiff."

She shuddered and reached for her sweater. "Alan, I'm going home. I *have* to be there before Tom arrives. I—I'm leaving."

His face darkened quickly. "You just wait one damn minute," he snapped. "You're not going to walk out of here and leave me with *this* on my shoulders. You're in this jam as much as I am, you know."

Her eyes widened with alarm. "But I *can't* stay here!" she wailed.

"Keep your voice down. These walls are thin. Someone will hear you."

Carla looked at the room around them as though it were a prison. Seeing Alan pace the floor like a caged animal, she croaked, "We're trapped, that's what. We're trapped in this ugly place with that—that—"

"Shut up. I'm trying to think

of everything—of every angle."

"Like what?"

He turned on her with narrowed eyes. "Well, suppose—just suppose Tom does know that you've been with someone, and—"

"No! Don't say that. I won't listen. I just *won't*!"

"You'll listen and you'll listen good. How do you know you don't talk in your sleep? How can you be sure that he hasn't followed you here? Maybe he thought that. . . Look, suppose he came here and found that guy in this room and thought he was me—thought *he* was the one you've been meeting here."

"No! Oh, no!" She shook her head quickly.

Again Alan paced the floor. Then he walked back into the bathroom, opened the shower door, grimaced and closed it again. "Jesus! That's horrible! Whoever did that was god-damned mad—insane." Now he stood still, frowning thoughtfully and hitting a fist against his open palm.

A long, agonizing moment of silence followed before he walked back into the bedroom, took a deep breath and said, "There's only one thing we can do. It's a hell of a chance, but we've got to take it."

"Leave here?" she asked. "Just get into our cars and drive away?"

"How can you be so stupid?" he said, spitting out the words. "The manager here would recognize us anytime, anywhere, because we've been here so often."

"But he doesn't know your name."

"This," he said, pointing to his face. "This he'd recognize, describe. Yours too. No doubt he's taken a good look at you more than once. He could identify our cars, too. Did you ever think of that? He may have our license numbers."

She was trembling again. "I want to go home. I have to get out of here. I wish I'd never come here in the first place, I wish..."

He dropped into a chair, closed his eyes and rested his chin on clenched, white-knuckled fists that looked like marble. Then he finally nodded. "Yes, all I know is to wait until dark, put that stiff in the trunk of my car, take him somewhere and dump him."

She caught her breath and then said, "You're right. Yes—you do that. I'll leave now, and after it gets dark, you—" She saw him cast her a long and thoughtful stare. "Don't look at me like that, Alan. You make me feel guilty."

"Do I?"

"Alan—I *have* to leave here. I can't help it that soon Tom will

be home, and that he'll be worried about me. He'll wonder where I am. He'll call the neighbors and our friends. How can I ever explain where I've been? It'll be late and dark and—"

"Funny," he said, "but suddenly I'm thinking about a rat leaving a sinking—"

"What do you expect me to do?" she cried.

"Nothing."

"But, Alan, you know I can't wait any longer."

He watched her silently as she walked to the window, parted the Venetian blinds a little and looked through. "The sun's going down," she said. "In winter, you know it gets dark early. You won't have long to wait."

"Thanks. That's most encouraging."

"Alan, where will you—put him?" she asked in a tight little voice.

"On your front porch. Where else?"

"Oh, Alan! You can't blame me. You can call Lisa and tell her you've been delayed, but I can't. There's no logical reason for me to be late. Tom would—"

"Look," he said pointing a finger at her. "If I'm caught dumping that body..."

"Dammit," she said. "What do you want me to do?"

"Testify for me if I get

caught," he told her. "That's what you can do."

"But you didn't kill that man, so they couldn't. . . *Could* they?"

"You think not? Carla, if I get caught dumping this body—or if his murder is traced to me—you're going to have to come forward and swear that we arrived in this room at exactly the same time. Understand? I don't want anybody to know that I got here before you did. Remember that."

"But then Tom will. . ." She stared at him while perspiration trickled down her forehead. "I can't believe it," she said. "I can't believe that all this is happening to me. Alan, if you cared for me, you wouldn't want me dragged into this horrible mess. You would try to protect me, keep my name out of it—if you loved me."

The air thickened with the heavy silence, and then he said, "Carla, whatever made you think that I did?"

"Alan!"

"For God's sake, what does that matter now? What does anything matter but to get ourselves out of this jam? I mean—we're in *real* trouble."

"It matters," she said slowly.

"Jesus! There's a dead man in that shower. There's no one to pin the blame on but us. *Us!* You and me!"

Carla's cheeks had turned from white to a fiery red, and her voice rose as she said, "I'm getting out of here. Alan, don't call me. Don't try to contact me—ever—in any way. I'll never help you. You should have told me that you didn't love me. Do you know what I hope? I hope you burn in hell!"

She was gone, and he was staring at the door she had slammed behind her. He heard her start her car, kill the engine, start it again. He stood like a stone pillar as she drove away. Then he went outside, looked around swiftly and, seeing no one, opened the trunk of his car, pulled out a raincoat and hurried back into the motel room.

He went directly to the shower, reached inside and dragged out the lifeless form. Hastily he wrapped his coat around it as he said, "We've done it again, good old George. Now it's back to the prop department for you."



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FEBRUARY 1977

Sophie

The voices were soft. They spoke in whispers of the empty life of a spinster schoolteacher. But Aunt Sophie's life had not always been so empty. Nor, she resolved, was her death to be a continuing empty void.

by WILHELMENA RAISBECK

FROM BELOW, THE VOICES were raised, then lowered, but not before she had caught the sound of her own name—*Sophie*. Slipping from the bed, she padded in flannel nightgown out to the stair landing where she sat to listen, unseen. She smiled. Silly Sophie. It reminded her of those nights—sharper in recollection than yesterday—when she had sat thus listening in on the parties of her elders.

This was no party.

Her nephew's voice, rumbling in undertone, was pleading, "Peg, I said *please*, later. The old girl just got here."

"...Bernie..." Peggy's words dribbled. "...realize ...plans..."

"Okay. Later, we'll talk about other arrangements. But for now we play it by ear—understand? She's had the rug pulled out from under her. She had no one but mother, and now—hell, there's only us. Godamighty, how sad!"

Peggy's murmurings, Bernard's dronings on, "...sadder even than mother's death. At least mother *lived*. Poor Aunt Sophie...nothing...spinster schoolteacher...empty..."

Sophie had heard enough. She shuffled back to her room



to creep in between the cool sheets and pulled the quilt up high over her chin. Snug, she lay quietly in the dark. Quiet and safe. Soon she chuckled softly. Silly Bernard! Empty? Hers an empty life?

★ ★ ★

"Sophie! Sophie!" That was little sister skipping through the house, braids bouncing, each skip dragging even lower the stocking pulled loosely over

her underwear. "Sophie! Oh, *there* you are. Whatcha doing, mooning away in here?"

"Who says I'm mooning, and you're not supposed to come in my room unless you're invited."

"Where you been? I been looking all over for you."

"I went to town for mama. Now go away."

"I got nobody to play with. Everybody's some place else. Let's play school."

"No. Go away. You're getting too old to play school anyhow."

"How can you tell that? When a person's too old for something."

"That's a silly question. I guess when she's old enough for something else to take its place."

"Please, please, please!"

"Stop whining and go on out and play. I'm going for a walk."

"Me, too. I'm coming along."

"No!"

On her way out, she heard the sound of a whimper and looking back saw the small chin quivering.

"Ah, little sister!" She drew the girl to her, gently smoothed back the wisps of hair from her face. "The magazine came today with the new Dolly Dimple paper dolls. If you cut them out and have them all lined up we can play when I get back. You wouldn't have any fun with me, honey. I have an errand to do

alone. It's just for sister Sophie."

On the path in front of the house she stopped in indecision. Where would he be? He could have walked straight home from town. Or he could have walked out to the meadow, with *her*. The thought of him in the meadow with *her* washed her body with a fierce ache. No, *no!* She'd try his home first, then the meadow.

She walked the few blocks briskly, driven by apprehension, but when she reached the familiar old white Victorian house—*his* house—she paused. She couldn't just walk right up and ring the doorbell. His mother might answer, and today she didn't want to see his mother. Glancing up as she moved slowly on, she noticed that the sash window of his room was open.

She walked to the end of the block, casually turned around—no one in sight—and retraced her steps back. She pursed her lips to whistle softly, *There are smiles that make us happy. There are smiles that make us blue.* His favorite song. *Their* song.

Over and over, the same few bars, back and forth in front of his house, whistling, louder and louder, discretion now forgotten. First she saw his form appear at the window, then his

head lower. She waved. He drew back.

She waited. He would either come down to her or he wouldn't. If he chose not to come, there was nothing she could do about it. Nothing.

Taking a deep breath, she looked up at the clear blue sky at the formation of white clouds. From somewhere the scent of honeysuckle flowed in powerfully. She glanced at the knothole in the picket fence. Her attention caught, riveted on the knothole, on the crack below it. She forced herself to look at the door through which he would come—or not come—taking in the white furbelows that decorated the framework of the porch.

The furbelows, the cloud formations, the scent of honeysuckle, the knothole—all these she knew would be stamped on her senses forever. While she waited . . .

He came out on the porch, passed under the furbelows, and her heart gave a glad cry. So tall and thin with his shaggy black hair, his pale skin, his sweetly curved mouth. Her Johnnie.

He came to her on the path. "Whatcha want, Sophie?"

"My, aren't we formal," she said lightly. Then, bowing her head, "Johnnie," she murmured, "it's been five days."

He looked away. "It's just I got things on my mind. I'm going off to college in two weeks."

"I know. You told me. That, along with a lot of other things."

"What other things? What are you hinting when you say it like that?"

"Nothing. Just we've talked about a lot of things. About how you're going to be a famous lawyer and about how, in two years after I've got my high school diploma, I'm going off to normal college. That is, if something better doesn't happen."

"Now I know you're hinting." His tone had turned teasing. "Come on, Sophie, shame."

"No I'm not. Really I'm not. Let's go for a walk, Johnnie. Please, Johnnie!"

"I got things to do inside."

"Just a short walk. It's two hours before supper time."

He could either walk with her or not. If he decided not to, there was nothing she could do about it. Nothing.

While her body screamed she looked into his eyes, deep into his eyes. Then she crinkled up her face in a smile.

"You've got the doggonest smile," he said. "I've always said you've got the prettiest smile of any girl around."

"Just up the road a little?"

"Maybe I'd better go in for my jacket."

"Don't bother. We can walk fast. The cool air will feel good."

As they walked along, he talking in snatches of his college plans, she reached out for his hand and, swinging hands, they eased to a stroll. Moving her hand around in his she doubled her middle finger to stoke his palm.

"Don't *do* that!" He spoke sharply and his face was flushed. But not in anger, she knew that.

"Why not? You do it to me."

"It's up to the boy to do it."

"I'll remember."

Silently on, hands clasped, on beneath trees brilliant with autumnal foliage, on toward the outskirts of town. Then suddenly, "Oh Johnnie!" It was a cry, a plea. "Oh Johnnie, I love you so!"

"Don't say that."

"It's true. I do. I won't ever love anyone else."

"All the girls love their first one. That's what the fellas always say. You'll get over it after I'm gone a while."

"No! *Never!* Johnnie, let's go to the meadow."

"We don't have time before supper."

"Oh yes we do. There's plenty of time."

He didn't answer right

away—she didn't expect him to. When he did, he first jerked them to a stop and his voice was low, urgent. "Sophie, someday we're going to get caught for sure if we keep going out there."

"That never bothered you before."

"I've thought about it a lot."

"All right. Then we won't."

Pulling away she moved on, slowly. After a moment's hesitation he stepped beside her, matched steps. "Oh, Sophie!" It was half moan, half reproach. He was yearning she could tell. "Oh, Sophie, Sophie."

"Race you." Picking up her skirts she ran. And he followed.

Standing under their tree in the tall grass of the meadow she knew it was safe to talk about it. He had kissed her and was holding her tight, nuzzling. He wouldn't turn back now, he couldn't.

"I went in town for mama today," she said softly. "Passed Stanley's Ice Cream Parlor. I looked in."

He released her. His voice was husky. "Barbara's a friend of mine, from way back."

"That's what I know. From before us. A special friend, Johnnie? A *courting* friend?"

"I guess so. Our families are close."

"You have an understanding?"

"I don't know. I guess so. What difference does it make?"

"Did you ever bring her out here?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"She wouldn't." He shrugged. "A fella can tell, the ones who will and the ones who won't. Sophie, it's nothing to be ashamed of." His lips found her neck again, nuzzling. And she let him.

When she was on her back with his mouth covering hers, she stretched her arms out wide beside her. Somewhere she had heard they could tell by fingerprints. She grabbed handfuls of the tall grass. While he fumbled with the buttons of her overblouse she used her grass-matted right hand to draw out the knife from under her waistband. It took both hands to plunge it.

When it was over and he lay lifeless and she had staggered to her feet she lifted the hem of her skirt to wipe the tears and the sweat from her face and from down into her neck where the trickling flowed.

* * *

"Sophie! Sophie! Oh there you are. You got back and didn't tell me."

"You're supposed to knock, little sister."

"I got the Dolly Dimples all cut out and ready."

"I don't feel good. You go on away and first thing in the morning I'll play school with you."

"You promise?"

"I promise."

* * *

"Bernie! Bernie, are you awake?"

"What? Whatzamatter?"

"She's up."

"Who's up?"

"Aunt Sophie, of course. Who else would I be talking about?"

"How would I know. You woke me up in the middle of the night for this? She has to go to the bathroom same as anyone else."

"But she didn't go to the bathroom. She's rumbling around down in the kitchen."

"So? She got hungry and went down for a snack."

"Well I don't like it. It's creepy."

"What's creepy about it? I think it's great she feels that much at home with us. Now go on back to sleep. Unless you want me to rub your back, hon? Is it your nerves?"

"It's not my nerves and my back's fine."

Silence. And then:

"Bernie? Are you asleep?"

"Fat chance."

"Did you hear the back door open?"

"So? No I didn't, but so what. If she wants to go outdoors and sit on the patio for awhile, so what. You've got to remember she's had the rug pulled out from under her."

"Oh, forget the damn rug. It think you ought to go down and see what she's doing."

"Not on your life. She's a free agent and I'm not making her feel like a child. Now go to sleep."

Soon, "Bernie?"

"Okay. I heard it. She's come back in."

"I feel better now. Goodnight, sweetheart."

"Goodnight, hon."

The next morning Peg sent Bernie up to wake Aunt Sophie for breakfast. (Later he was to say he was grateful for that, that he had been the one to walk first into that room.)

When he came back down, his face ashen, his heavy jowls atremble, he muttered something about a knife stuck in her abdomen. And, cutting across his wife's outcry and with eyes glazed in disbelief, about the grass strewed around the gaping wound.

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